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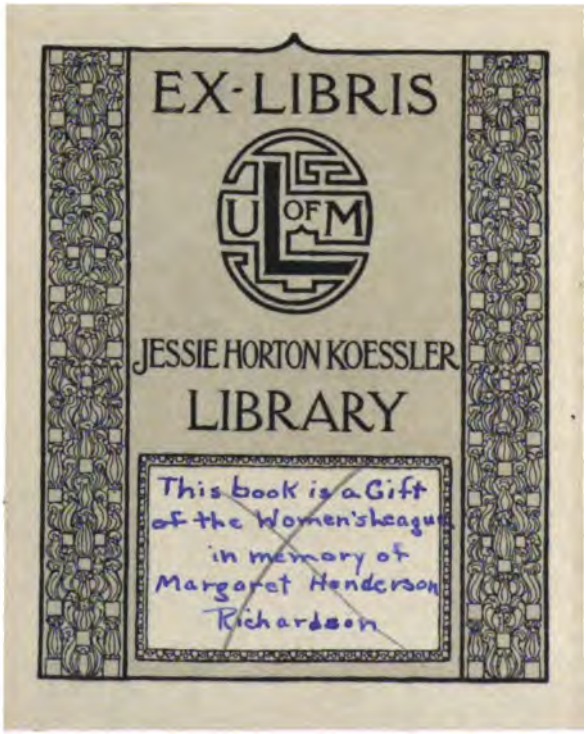

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THE
WORKS OF
HONORÉ
DE BALZAC

"I will lay a wager, monsieur, . . . that you dine for forty sous at Hurbain's—"
(*The Muse of the Department*, part 2, page 232)

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THE WORKS OF HONORÉ DE BALZAC

THE CHOUANS

THE GONDREVILLE MYSTERY

AND OTHER STORIES

With Introductions by
GEORGE SAINTSBURY

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THE CHOUANS

AND

A PASSION IN THE DESERT

INTRODUCTION

WHEN, many years after its original publication, Balzac reprinted *Les Chouans* as a part of the *Comédie Humaine*, he spoke of it in the dedication to his old friend M. Théodore Dablin as "perhaps better than its reputation." He probably referred to the long time which had passed without a fresh demand for it; for, as has been pointed out in the General Introduction to this Series of translations, it first made his fame, and with it he first emerged from the purgatory of anonymous hack-writing. It would therefore have argued a little ingratitude in him had he shown himself dissatisfied with the original reception. The book, however, has, it may be allowed, never ranked among the special favorites of Balzacians; and though it was considerably altered and improved from its first form, it has certain defects which are not likely to escape any reader. In it Balzac was still trying the adventure-novel, the novel of incident; and though he here substitutes a nobler model—Scott, for whom he always had a reverence as intelligent as it was generous—for the Radcliffian or Lewisian ideals of his nonage, he was still not quite at home. Some direct personal knowledge or experience of the matters he wrote about was always more or less necessary to him; and the enthusiasm with which he afterwards acknowledged, in a letter to Beyle, the presence of such knowledge in that writer's military passages, confesses his own sense of inferiority.

It is not, however, in the actual fighting scenes, though

they are not of the first class, that the drawbacks of *Les Chouans* lie. Though the present version is not my work, I translated the book some years ago, a process which brings out much more vividly than mere reading the want of art which distinguishes the management of the story. There are in it the materials of a really first-rate romance. The opening skirmish, the hairbreadth escape of Montauran at Alençon, the scenes at the Vivetière, not a few of the incidents of the attack on Fougères, and, above all, the finale, are, or at least might have been made, of the most thrilling interest. Nor are they by any means ill supported by the characters. Hulot is one of the best of Balzac's *grognard* heroes; Montauran may be admitted by the most faithful and jealous devotee of Scott to be a *jeune premier* who unites all the qualifications of his part with a freedom from the flatness which not unfrequently characterizes Sir Walter's own good young men, and which drew from Mr. Thackeray the equivocal encomium that he should like to be mother-in-law to several of them. Marche-à-Terre is very nearly a masterpiece; and many of the minor personages are excellent for their work. Only Corentin (who, by the way, appears frequently in other books later) is perhaps below what he ought to be. But the women make up for him. Mademoiselle de Verneuil has admirable piquancy and charm; Madame du Gua is a good bad heroine; and Francine is not a mere soubrette of the machine-made pattern by any means.

How is it, then, that the effect of the book is, as many readers unquestionably feel it to be, "heavy"? The answer is not very difficult; it is simply that Balzac had not yet learned his trade, and that this particular trade was not exactly his. He had a certain precedent in some—not in all, nor in the

best—of Scott's books, and in many of his other models, for setting slowly to work; and he abused that precedent here in the most merciless manner. If two-thirds of the first chapter had been cut away, and the early part of the second had been not less courageously thinned, the book would probably have twice the hold that it at present has on the imagination. As it is, I have known some readers (and I have no doubt that they are fairly representative) who honestly avowed themselves to be "choked off" by the endless vacillations and conversations of Hulot at the "Pilgrim," by the superabundant talk at the inn, and generally by the very fault which, as I have elsewhere noticed, Balzac represents in a brother novelist, the fault of giving the reader no definite grasp of story. Balzac could not deny himself the luxury of long conversations; but he never had, and at this time had less than at any other, the art which Dumas possessed in perfection—the art of making the conversation tell the story. Until, therefore, the talk between the two lovers on the way to the Vivetière, the action is so obscure, so broken by description and chat, and so little relieved, except in the actual skirmish and wherever Marche-a-Terre appears, by real *business,* that it cannot but be felt as fatiguing. It can only be promised that if the reader will bear up or skip intelligently till this point he will not be likely to find any fault with the book afterwards. The *jour sans lendemain* is admirable almost throughout.

This unfortunate effect is considerably assisted by the working of one of Balzac's numerous and curious crochets. Those who have only a slight acquaintance with the *Comédie Humaine* must have noticed that chapter-divisions are for the most part wanting in it, or are so few and of such enor-

mous length, that they are rather parts than chapters. It must not, however, be supposed that this was an original peculiarity of the author's, or one founded on any principle. Usually, though not invariably, the original editions of his longer novels, and even of his shorter tales, are divided into chapters, with or without headings, like those of other and ordinary mortals. But when he came to codify and arrange the *Comédie,* he, for some reason which I do not remember to have seen explained anywhere in his letters, struck out these divisions, or most of them, and left the books solid, or merely broken up into a few parts. Thus *Le Dernier Chouan* (the original book) had thirty-two chapters, though it had no chapter-headings, while the remodeled work as here given has only three, the first containing nearly a fifth, the second nearly two-fifths, and the third not much less than a half of the whole work.

Now, everybody who has attended to the matter must see that this absence of chapters is a great addition of heaviness in the case where a book is exposed to the charge of being heavy. The named chapters of Dumas supply something like an argument of the whole book; and even the unnamed ones of Scott lighten, punctuate, and relieve the course of the story. It may well be that Balzac's sense that "the story" with him was not the first, or anything like the first consideration, had something to do with his innovation. But I do not think it improved his books at any time, and in the more romantic class of them it is a distinct disadvantage.

Le Dernier Chouan ou La Bretagne en 1800 first appeared in March 1829, published in four volumes by Canel, with a preface (afterwards suppressed) bearing date the 15th Janu-

ary of the same year. Its subsequent form, with the actual title, threw the composition back to August 1827, and gave Fougères itself as the place of composition. This revised form, or second edition, appeared in 1834 in two volumes, published by Vimont. When, twelve years later, it took rank in the *Comédie Humaine* as part of the *Scènes de la Vie Militaire,* a second preface was inserted, which in its turn was cancelled by the author. G. S.

Une Passion dans le Désert is the only other Scene of Military Life. There is no satisfactory explanation why Balzac so limited this section of the *Comédie.* On a later consideration possibly he might have included a story like *Le Colonel Chabert.* Probably he contemplated writing at some future time new stories of adventure. But on the other hand, his own realized lack of success in the warlike scenes of his *Œuvres de Jeunesse* may have given him a perpetual distaste for this species of story. This distaste, however, if present, should have been outweighed by the fact that to *Les Chouans* —crude though it may be—is due his first success as an author.

Une Passion dans le Désert has the date of 1832, only five years after the appearance of *Les Chouans,* but it bears abundant testimony of a much firmer grasp of hand; it leaves one with the impression that had the maturer Balzac dealt with events of strife more extensively, he would perhaps have made a success of Military Life approaching more nearly that of Parisian Life or of Philosophical Studies. Still this is mere speculation, for the mature Balzac lent himself to the scrutiny and analysis of real life round about him, rather

than to the conjuring up of imaginary action on the field of adventure. With the former he felt and became familiar; with the latter he was never distinctly at ease.

While marred somewhat by a touch of ultra things, *Une Passion dans le Désert* is a vivid story, told with much terseness and effect. The description of the desert is unique in its way, showing strongly the author's power of visualization.

PUBLISHER'S EDITOR.

THE CHOUANS

OR BRITTANY IN 1799

To M. Théodore Dablin, Merchant,
My first book to my earliest friend.
De Balzac.

I.

THE AMBUSCADE

In the early days of the year VIII. at the beginning of Vendémiaire, or towards the end of the month of September 1799, reckoning by the present calendar, some hundred peasants and a fair number of townspeople who had set out from Fougères in the morning to go to Mayenne, were climbing the mountain of the Pèlerine, which lies about half-way between Fougères and Ernée, a little place where travelers are wont to break their journey. The detachment, divided up into larger and smaller groups, presented as a whole such an outlandish collection of costumes, and brought together individuals belonging to such widely different neighborhoods and callings, that it may be worth while to describe their various characteristics, and in this way impart to the narrative the lifelike coloring that is so highly valued in our day, although, according to certain critics, this is a hindrance to the portrayal of sentiments.

Some of the peasants—most of them in fact—went barefoot. Their whole clothing consisted in a large goatskin, which covered them from shoulder to knee, and breeches of very coarse white cloth, woven of uneven threads, that bore witness to the neglected state of local industries. Their

long matted locks mingled so habitually with the hairs of their goatskin cloaks, and so completely hid the faces that they bent upon the earth, that the goat's skin might have been readily taken for a natural growth, and at first sight the miserable wearers could hardly be distinguished from the animals whose hide now served them for a garment. But very shortly a pair of bright eyes peering through the hair, like drops of dew shining in thick grass, spoke of a human intelligence within, though the expression of the eyes certainly inspired more fear than pleasure. Their heads were covered with dirty red woolen bonnets, very like the Phrygian caps that the Republic in those days had adopted as a symbol of liberty. Each carried a long wallet made of sacking over his shoulder at the end of a thick knotty oak cudgel. There was not much in the wallets.

Others wore above their caps a great broad-brimmed felt hat, with a band of woolen chenille of various colors about the crown, and these were clad altogether in the same coarse linen cloth that furnished the wallets and breeches of the first group; there was scarcely a trace of the new civilization in their dress. Their long hair straggled over the collar of a round jacket which reached barely to the hips, a garment peculiar to the Western peasantry, with little square side pockets in it. Beneath this open-fronted jacket was a waistcoat, fastened with big buttons and made of the same cloth. Some wore sabots on the march, others thriftily carried them in their hands. Soiled with long wear, blackened with dust and sweat, this costume had one distinct merit of its own; for if it was less original than the one first described, it represented a period of historical transition, that ended in the almost magnificent apparel of a few men who shone out like flowers in the midst of the company.

Their red or yellow waistcoats, decorated with two parallel rows of copper buttons, like a sort of oblong cuirass, and their blue linen breeches, stood out in vivid contrast to the white clothing and skin cloaks of their comrades; they looked like poppies and cornflowers in a field of wheat.

Some few of them were shod with the wooden sabots that the Breton peasants make for themselves, but most of them wore great iron-bound shoes and coats of very coarse material, shaped after the old French fashion, to which our peasants still cling religiously. Their shirt collars were fastened by silver studs with designs of an anchor or a heart upon them; and, finally, their wallets seemed better stocked than those of their comrades. Some of them even included a flask, filled with brandy no doubt, in their traveler's outfit, hanging it round their necks by a string.

A few townspeople among these semi-barbarous folk looked as if they marked the extreme limits of civilization in those regions. Like the peasants, they exhibited conspicuous differences of costume, some wearing round bonnets, and some flat or peaked caps; some had high boots with the tops turned down, some wore shoes surmounted by gaiters. Ten or so of them had put themselves into the jacket known to the Republicans as a *carmagnole;* others again, well-to-do artisans doubtless, were dressed from head to foot in materials of uniform color; and the most elegantly arrayed of them all wore swallow-tailed coats or riding-coats of blue or green cloth in more or less threadbare condition. These last, moreover, wore boots of various patterns, as became people of consequence, and flourished large canes, like fellows who face their luck with a stout heart. A head carefully powdered here and there, or decently plaited queues, showed the desire to make the most of ourselves which is inspired in us by a new turn taken in our fortunes or our education.

Any one seeing these men brought together as if by chance, and astonished at finding themselves assembled, might have thought that a conflagration had driven the population of a little town from their homes. But the times and the place made this body of men interesting for very different reasons. A spectator initiated into the secrets of the civil discords which then were rending France would have readily picked out the small number of citizens in that com-

pany upon whose loyalty the Republic could depend, for almost every one who composed it had taken part against the Government in the war of four years ago. One last distinguishing characteristic left no doubt whatever as to the divided opinions of the body of men. The Republicans alone were in spirits as they marched. As for the rest of the individuals that made up the band, obviously as they might differ in their dress, one uniform expression was visible on all faces and in the attitude of each—the expression which misfortune gives.

The faces of both townspeople and peasants bore the stamp of deep dejection; there was something sullen about the silence they kept. All of them were bowed apparently beneath the yoke of the same thought—a terrible thought, no doubt, but carefully hidden away. Every face was inscrutable; the unwonted lagging of their steps alone could betray a secret understanding. A few of them were marked out by a rosary that hung round about their necks, although they ran some risks by keeping about them this sign of a faith that had been suppressed rather than uprooted: and one of these from time to time would shake back his hair and defiantly raise his head. Then they would furtively scan the woods, the footpaths, and the crags that shut in the road on either side, much as a dog sniffs the wind as he tries to scent the game; but as they only heard the monotonous sound of the steps of their mute comrades, they hung their heads again with the forlorn faces of convicts on their way to the galleys, where they are now to live and die.

The advance of this column upon Mayenne, composed as it was of such heterogeneous elements, and representing such widely different opinions, was explained very readily by the presence of another body of troops which headed the detachment. About a hundred and fifty soldiers were marching at the head of the column under the command of the *chief of a demi-brigade*. It may not be unprofitable to explain, for those who have not witnessed the drama of the Revolution, that this appellation was substituted for the

title of colonel, then rejected by patriots as too aristocratic. The soldiers belonged to a demi-brigade of infantry stationed in the depôt at Mayenne. In those disturbed times, the soldiers of the Republic were all dubbed Blues by the population of the West. The blue and red uniforms of the early days of the Republic, which are too well remembered even yet to require description, had given rise to this nickname. So the detachment of Blues was serving as an escort to this assemblage, consisting of men who were nearly all ill satisfied at being thus directed upon Mayenne, there to be submitted to a military discipline which must shortly clothe them all alike, and drill a uniformity into their march and ways of thinking which was at present entirely lacking among them.

This column was the contingent of Fougères, obtained thence with great difficulty; and representing its share of the levy which the Directory of the French Republic had required by a law passed on the tenth day of the previous Messidor. The Government had asked for a subsidy of a hundred millions, and for a hundred thousand men, so as to send reinforcements at once to their armies, then defeated by the Austrians in Italy and by the Prussians in Germany; while Suwarroff, who had aroused Russia's hopes of making a conquest of France, menaced them from Switzerland. Then it was that the departments of the West known as la Vendée, Brittany, and part of Lower Normandy, which had been pacified three years ago by the efforts of General Hoche after four years of hard fighting, appeared to think that the moment had come to renew the struggle.

Attacked thus in so many directions, the Republic seemed to be visited with a return of her early vigor. At first the defence of the departments thus threatened had been intrusted to the patriotic residents by one of the provisions of that same law of Messidor. The Government, as a matter of fact, had neither troops nor money available for the prosecution of civil warfare, so the difficulty was evaded by a bit of bombast on the part of the Legislature. They could

do nothing for the revolted districts, so they reposed complete confidence in them. Perhaps also they expected that this measure, by setting the citizens at odds among themselves, would extinguish the rebellion at its source. *"Free companies will be organized in the departments of the West"*—so ran the proviso which brought about such dreadful retaliation.

This impolitic ordinance drove the West into so hostile an attitude, that the Directory had no hope left of subduing it all at once. In a few days, therefore, the Assemblies were asked for particular enactments with regard to the slight reinforcements due by virtue of the proviso that had authorized the formation of the free companies. So a new law had been proclaimed a few days before this story begins, and came into effect on the third complementary day of the calendar in the year VII., ordaining that these scanty levies of men should be organized into regiments. The regiments were to bear the names of the departments of the Sarthe, Ourthe, Mayenne, Ille-et-Vilaine, Morbihan, Loire-Inférieure, and Maine-et-Loire. *These regiments*—so the law provided—*are specially enrolled to oppose the Chouans, and can never be drafted over the frontiers on any pretext whatsoever.* These tedious but little known particulars explain at once the march of the body of men under escort by the Blues, and the weakness of the position in which the Directory found themselves. So, perhaps, it is not irrelevant to add that these beautiful and patriotic intentions of theirs came no further on the road to being carried out than their insertion in the *Bulletin des Lois.* The decrees of the Republic had no longer the forces of great moral ideas, of patriotism, or of terror behind them. These had been the causes of their former practical efficiency; so now they created men and millions on paper which never found their way into the army or the treasury. The machinery of the Revolutionary government was directed by incapable hands, and circumstances made impression on the administration of the law instead of being controlled by it.

The departments of Mayenne and Ille-et-Vilaine were then in command of an experienced officer, who, being on the spot, determined that now was the opportune moment for arranging to draw his contingents out of Brittany, and more particularly from Fougères, which was one of the most formidable centres of Chouan operations, hoping in this way to diminish the strength of these districts from which danger threatened. This devoted veteran availed himself of the delusive provisions of the law to proclaim that he would at once arm and equip the requisitionaries, and that he held in hand for their benefit a month's pay, which the Government had promised to these irregular forces. Although Brittany declined every kind of military service at that time, this plan of operations succeeded at the first start on the faith of the promises made, and so readily that the officer began to grow uneasy.

But he was an old watch-dog, and not easily put off his guard, so that, as soon as he saw a portion of his contingent hurrying to the bureau of the district, he suspected that there was some hidden motive for this rapid influx of men; and, perhaps, he had guessed rightly when he believed that their object was to procure arms for themselves. Upon this he took measures to secure his retreat upon Alençon, without waiting for the later arrivals. He wished to be within call of the better affected districts, though even there the continual spread of the insurrection made the success of his plans extremely problematical. In obedience to his instructions, he had kept the news of the disasters that had befallen our armies abroad a profound secret, as well as the disquieting tidings that came from la Vendée; and on the morning when this story begins, he had made an effort to reach Mayenne by a forced march. Once there, he thought to carry out the law at his leisure, and to fill up the gaps in his demi-brigade with Breton conscripts. That word *conscript,* which became so well known later on, had replaced for the first time, in the wording of the law, the term Requisitionary, by which the Republican recruits had at first been described.

Before leaving Fougères, the commandant had made his own troops surreptitiously take charge of all the cartridge boxes and rations of bread belonging to the entire body of men, so that the attention of the conscripts should not be called to the length of the journey. He had made up his mind to call no halt on the way to Ernée; the Chouans doubtless were abroad in the district, and the men of his new contingent, once recovered from their surprise, might enter into concerted action with them. A sullen silence prevailed among the band of requisitionaries, who had been taken aback by the old republican's tactics; and this, taken with their lagging gait as they climbed the mountain side, increased to the highest pitch the anxiety of the commandant of the demi-brigade, Hulot by name. He was keenly interested in noting those marked characteristics which have been previously described, and was walking in silence among five subaltern officers who all respected their chief's preoccupied mood.

As Hulot reached the summit of the Pèlerine, however, he instinctively turned his head to examine the restless faces of the requisitionaries, and forthwith broke the silence. As a matter of fact, the Bretons had been moving more and more slowly, and already they had put an interval of some two hundred paces between them and their escort. Hulot made a sort of grimace peculiar to him at this.

"What the devil is the matter with the ragamuffins?" he cried in the deep tones of his voice. "Instead of stepping out, these conscripts of ours have their legs glued together, I think."

At these words the officers who were with him turned to look behind them, acting on an impulse like that which makes us wake with a start at some sudden noise. The sergeants and corporals followed their example, and the whole company came to a standstill, without waiting for the wished-for word of command to "Halt!" If, in the first place, the officers gave a glance over the detachment that was slowly crawling up the Pèlerine like an elongated tortoise, they were sufficiently struck with the view that spread

itself out before their eyes to leave Hulot's remark unanswered, its importance not being at all appreciated by them. They were young men who, like many others, had been torn away from learned studies to defend their country, and the art of war had not yet extinguished the love of other arts in them.

Although they were coming from Fougères, whence the same picture that now lay before their eyes could be seen equally well, they could not help admiring it again for the last time, with all the differences that the change in the point of view had made in it. They were not unlike those dilettanti who take more pleasure in a piece of music for a closer knowledge of its details.

From the heights of the Pèlerine the wide valley of the Couësnon extends before the traveler's eyes. The town of Fougères occupies one of the highest points on the horizon. From the high rock on which it is built the castle commands three or four important ways of communication, a position which formerly made it one of the keys of Brittany. From their point of view the officers saw the whole length and breadth of this basin, which is as remarkable for its marvelously fertile soil as for the varied scenery it presents. The mountains of schist rise above it on all sides, as in an amphitheatre, the warm coloring of their sides is disguised by the oak forests upon them, and little cool valleys lie concealed in their slopes.

The crags describe a wall about an apparently circular enclosure, and in the depths below them lies a vast stretch of delicate meadow-land laid out like an English garden. A multitude of irregularly-shaped quick-set hedges surrounds the numberless domains, and trees are planted everywhere, so that this green carpet presents an appearance not often seen in French landscapes. Unsuspected beauty lies hidden in abundance among its manifold shadows and lights, and effects strong and broad enough to strike the most indifferent nature.

At this particular moment the stretch of country was

brightened by a fleeting glory such as Nature loves at times to use to heighten the grandeur of her imperishable creations. All the while that the detachment was crossing the valley, the rising sun had slowly scattered the thin white mists that hover above the fields in September mornings; and now when the soldiers looked back, an invisible hand seemed to raise the last of the veils that had covered the landscape. The fine delicate clouds were like a transparent gauze enshrouding precious jewels that lie, exciting our curiosity, behind it. All along the wide stretch of horizon that the officers could see, there was not the lightest cloud in heaven to persuade them by its silver brightness that that great blue vault above them was really the sky. It was more like a silken canopy held up by the uneven mountain peaks, and borne aloft to protect this wonderful combination of field and plain and wood and river.

The officers did not weary of scanning that extent of plain, which gave rise to so much beauty of field and wood. Some of them looked hither and thither for long before their gaze was fixed at last on the wonderful diversity of color in the woods, where the sober hues of groups of trees that were turning sere brought out more fully the richer hues of the bronze foliage, a contrast heightened still further by irregular indentations of emerald green meadow. Others dwelt on the warm coloring of the fields, with their cone-shaped stooks of buckwheat piled up like the sheaves or arms that soldiers make in a bivouac, and the opposing hues of the fields of rye that were interspersed among them, all golden with stubble after the harvest. There was a dark-colored slate roof here and there, with a white smoke ascending from it; and here again a bright silvery streak of some winding bit of the Couësnon would attract the gaze—a snare for the eyes which follow it, and so lead the soul all unconsciously into vague musings. The fresh fragrance of the light autumn wind and the strong forest scents came up like an intoxicating incense for those who stood admiring this beautiful country, and saw with delight its strange wild-flowers and

the vigorous green growth that makes it a rival of the neighboring land of Brittany, the country which bears the same name in common with it. A few cattle gave life to the scene, that was already full of dramatic interest. The birds were singing, giving to the breezes in the valley a soft low vibration of music.

If the attentive imagination will discern to the utmost the splendid effects of the lights and shadows, the misty outlines of the hills, the unexpected distant views afforded in places where there was a gap among the trees, a broad stretch of water, or the coy, swiftly-winding courses of streams; if memory fills in, so to speak, these outlines, brief as the moment that they represent; then those for whom these pictures possess a certain worth will form a dim idea of the enchanting scene that came as a surprise to the yet impressionable minds of the young officers.

They thought that these poor creatures were leaving their own country and their beloved customs in sadness, in order to die, perhaps, on foreign soil, and instinctively forgave them for a reluctance which they well understood. Then with a kindness of heart natural to soldiers, they disguised their complaisance under the appearance of a wish to study the lovely landscape from a military point of view. But Hulot, for the commandant must be called by his name, to avoid his scarcely euphonious title of chief of demi-brigade, was not the kind of soldier who is smitten with the charms of scenery at a time when danger is at hand, even if the Garden of Eden were to lie before him. He shook his head disapprovingly, and his thick black eyebrows were contracted, giving a very stern expression to his face.

"Why the devil don't they come along?" he asked for the second time, in a voice that had grown hoarse with many a hard campaign. "Is there some Holy Virgin or other in the village whose hand they want to squeeze?"

"You want to know why?" a voice replied.

The sounds seemed to come from one of the horns with which herdsmen in these dales call their cattle together.

The commandant wheeled round at the words, as sharply as if he had felt a prick from a sword point, and saw, two paces from him, a queerer looking being than any of those now on the way to Mayenne to serve the Republic.

The stranger was a broad-shouldered, thick-set man; his head looked almost as large as that of a bull, and was not unlike it in other respects; his wide, thick nostrils made his nose seem shorter than it really was; his thick lips turned up to display a snowy set of teeth, long lashes bristled round the large black eyes, and he had a pair of drooping ears, and red hair that seemed to belong rather to some root-eating race than to the noble Caucasian stock. There was an entire absence of any other characteristics of civilized man about the bare head, which made it more remarkable still. His face might have been turned to bronze by the sun; its angular outlines suggested a remote resemblance to the granite rocks that formed the underlying soil of the district, and his face was the only discernible portion of the body of this strange being. From his neck downwards he was enveloped in a kind of smock-frock, or blouse of a coarse kind of material, much rougher than that of which the poorest conscript's breeches were made. This smock-frock of *sarrau,* in which an antiquary would have recognized the *saye* (*saga*) or *sayon* of the Gauls, reached only half-way down his person, where his nether integuments of goat's skin were fastened to it by wooden skewers, so roughly cut that the bark was not removed from all of them. It was scarcely possible to distinguish a human form in the "goatskins" (so they call them in the district), which completely covered his legs and thighs. His feet were hidden by huge sabots. His long, sleek hair, very near the color of the skins he wore, was parted in the middle and fell on either side of his face, much as you see it arranged in some mediæval statues still existing in cathedrals. Instead of the knotty cudgel with which the conscripts slung their wallets from their shoulders, he was hugging a large whip to his breast, like a gun, a whip with a cleverly plaited thong that seemed quite twice the usual length.

The sudden appearance of this quaint being seemed readily explicable. At the first sight of him several officers took him for a conscript or requisitionary (both of these terms were still in use) who had seen the halt made by the column and had fallen in with it. Nevertheless the man's arrival amazed the commandant strangely; for though there was not the slightest trace of alarm about him, he grew thoughtful. After a survey of the newcomer, he repeated his question mechanically, as if he were preoccupied with sinister thoughts.

"Yes, why don't they come up? Do you happen to know?"

His surly interlocutor answered with an accent which showed that he found it sufficiently difficult to express himself in French. "Because," he said, stretching out his big, rough hand towards Ernée, "there lies Maine, and here Brittany ends," and he struck the ground heavily as he threw down the handle of his whip at the commandant's feet.

If a barbarous tomtom were suddenly struck in the middle of a piece of music, the impression produced would be very like the effect made upon the spectators of this scene by the stranger's concise speech. That word "speech" will scarcely give an idea of the hatred, the thirst for vengeance expressed in the scornful gesture and the brief word or two, or of the fierce and stern energy in the speaker's face. The extreme roughness of the man, who looked as though he had been hewn into shape by an axe, his gnarled skin, the lines of ignorant stupidity graven in every feature, gave him the look of a savage divinity. As he stood there in his prophetic attitude he looked like an embodied spirit of that Brittany which had just awakened from a three years' sleep to begin a struggle once more in which victory could never show her face save through a double veil of crape.

"There's a pretty image," said Hulot to himself. "To my mind, he looks like an envoy from folk who are about to open negotiations with powder and ball!"

When he had muttered these words between his teeth, the

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

He sat himself down quietly at the roadside

commandant's eyes traveled from the man before him over the landscape, from the landscape to the detachment, from the detachment over the steep slopes on either side of the way with the tall gorse-bushes of Brittany shading their summits, and thence he suddenly turned upon the stranger, whom he submitted to a mute examination, ending it at last by asking him sharply:

"Where do you come from?"

His keen, piercing eyes were trying to read the secret thoughts beneath the inscrutable face before him, a face which had meantime resumed the usual expression of vacuous stolidity that envelops a peasant's face in repose.

"From the country of the *gars*," the man answered, without a trace of apprehension.

"Your name?"

"Marche-à-Terre."

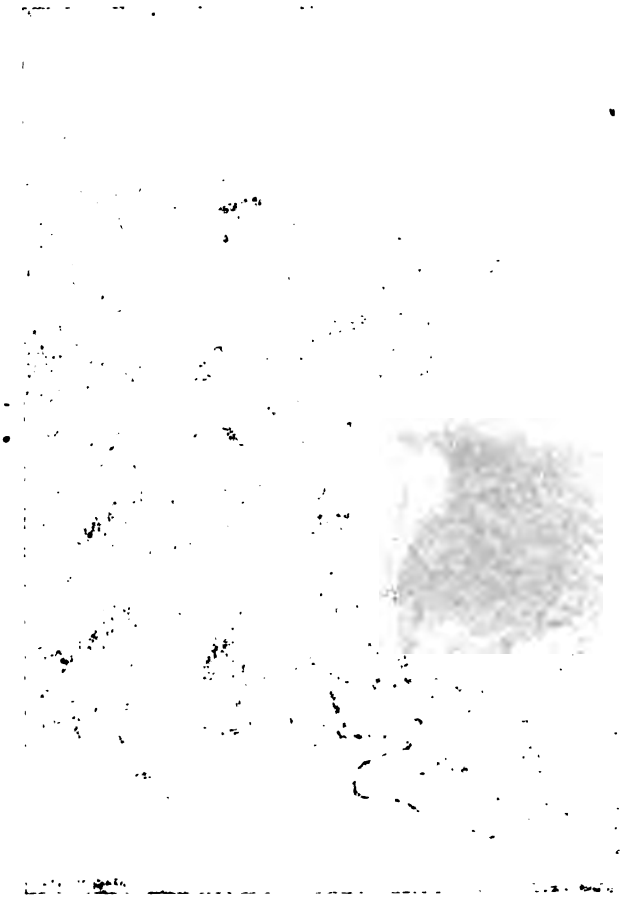
"What makes you call yourself by your Chouan nickname? It is against the law."

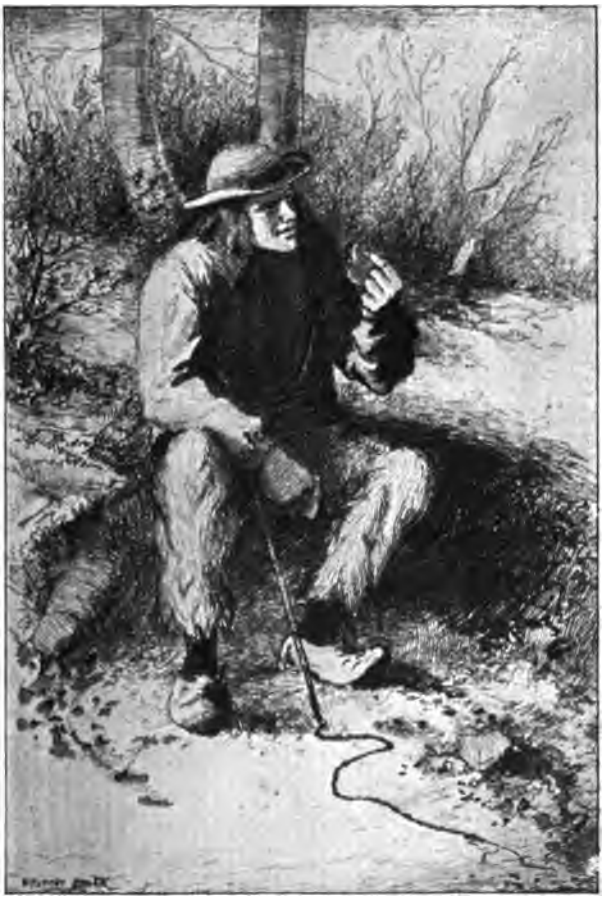
Marche-à-Terre, as he called himself, gaped at the commandant with such a thoroughly genuine appearance of imbecility, that the soldier thought his remark was not understood.

"Are you part of the Fougères requisition?"

To this question Marche-à-Terre replied with an "I don't know," in that peculiarly hopeless fashion which puts a stop to all conversation. He sat himself down quietly at the roadside, drew from his blouse some slices of a thin dark bannock made of buckwheat meal, the staple food of Brittany, a melancholy diet in which only a Breton can take delight, and began to eat with wooden imperturbability.

He looked so absolutely devoid of every kind of intelligence, that the officers compared him as he sat first to one of the cattle browsing in the pasture land below, next to an American Indian, and lastly to some aboriginal savage at the Cape of Good Hope. Even the commandant himself was deceived by his attitude, and heeded his fears no longer, till by way of making assurance surer still he gave a last





He sat himself down quietly at the roadside

glance at the suspected herald of an approaching massacre, and noticed that his hair, his blouse, and his goatskin breeches were covered with thorns, bits of wood, scraps of bramble and leaves, as if the Chouan had come through the thickets for a long distance. He looked significantly at his adjutant Gérard, who was standing beside him, gripped his hand, and said in a low voice:

"We went out to look for wool, and we shall go back again shorn."

The astonished officers eyed one another in silence.

Here we must digress a little, so that those stay-at-home people who are accustomed to believe nothing because they never see anything for themselves, may be induced to sympathize with the fears of the commandant Hulot, for these people would be capable of denying the existence of a Marche-à-Terre and of the Western peasants who behaved with such heroism in those times.

The word *gars,* pronounced *gâ,* is a relic of the Celtic tongue. It passed into French from the Bas-Breton, and of all words in the language that we speak to-day in France, this one preserves the oldest traditions. The *gais* was the principal weapon of the Gaëls or Gauls; *gaisdé* meant armed, *gais* meant valor, and *gas* force. The close similarity proves that the word *gars* is connected with these expressions in the language of our ancestors. The word corresponds to the Latin word *vir,* a man; the significance at the root of *virtus,* strength or courage. The apology for this dissertation lies in the fact that the word is a part of our national history, and this possibly may reinstate such words as *gars, garçon, garçonette, garce, garcette,* in the good graces of some persons who banish them all from conversation as uncouth expressions; they come of a warlike origin for all that, and will turn up now and again in the course of this narrative. *"C'est une fameuse garce!"* was the little appreciated eulogium which Mme. de Staël received in a little canton of the Vendomois, where she spent some of her days in exile.

The Gaul has left deeper traces of his character in Brit-

tany than in all the rest of France. Those parts of the province, where the wild life and superstitious spirit of our rough ancestors are glaringly evident, so to speak, even in our day, were called the *Pays des Gars*. When the population of a district consists of a number of uncivilized people like those who have just been collected together in the opening scene, the folk round about in the countryside call them "The Gars of such and such a parish," which classical epithet is a sort of reward for the loyalty of their efforts to preserve the traditions of their Celtic language and customs. In their daily lives, moreover, there are deep traces of the superstitious beliefs and practices of ancient times. Feudal customs are even yet respected, antiquaries find Druidical monuments there, and the spirit of modern civilization hesitates to traverse those vast tracts of primeval forest. There is an incredible ferocity and a dogged obstinacy about the national character, but an oath is religiously kept. Our laws, customs, and dress, our modern coinage and our language, are utterly unknown among them; and if, on the one hand, their combination of patriarchal simplicity and heroic virtues makes them less apt at projecting complicated schemes than Mohicans or North American redskins, on the other hand they are as magnanimous, as hardy, and as shrewd.

The fact that Brittany is situated in Europe makes it very much more interesting than Canada. It is surrounded by enlightenment, but the beneficent warmth never penetrates it; the country is like some frozen piece of coal that lies, a dim black mass, in the heart of a blazing fire. The attempts made by some shrewd heads to make this large portion of France, with its undeveloped resources, amenable, to give it social life and prosperity, had failed; even the efforts of the Government had come to nothing among a stationary people, wedded to the usages prescribed by immemorial tradition. The natural features of the country offer a sufficient explanation of this misfortune; the land is furrowed with ravines and torrents, with lakes and marshes, it bristles with hedges, as they call a sort of earthwork or fortification

that makes a citadel of every field. There are neither roads nor canals, and the temper of an ignorant population must be taken into account, a population given over to prejudices that cause dangers to which this story will bear witness, a population that will none of our modern methods of agriculture.

The picturesque nature of the country and the superstitions of its inhabitants both preclude the aggregation of individuals and the consequent benefits that might be gained from a comparison and exchange of ideas. There are no villages. Frail structures, cabins, as they call them, are scattered abroad over the countryside, and every family there lives as if in a desert. At the only times when the people are brought together, the meeting is a brief one, and takes place on Sundays, or on one of the religious festivals observed by the parish. These unsociable gatherings only last for a few hours, and are always presided over by the *recteur*, the only master that their dull minds recognize. The peasant hears the awe-inspiring voice of the priest, and returns to his unwholesome dwelling for the week; he goes out to work and goes home again to sleep. If any one goes near him, it is that same rector, who is the soul of the countryside. It was at the bidding of the priest, too, that so many thousands of men flung themselves upon the Republic, when these very Breton districts furnished large bodies of men for the first Chouan organization, five years before this story begins.

In those days several brothers, daring smugglers, named Cottereau, who gave their name to the war, had plied their dangerous trade between Laval and Fougères. But there was nothing noble about these rural outbreaks; for if La Vendée had elevated brigandage into warfare, Brittany had degraded war into brigandage. The proscription of the princes and the overthrow of religion were, to the Chouans, simply pretexts for plundering excursions, and all the events of that internecine warfare were colored by something of the savage ferocity peculiar to the disposition of the race. When

the real supporters of the Monarchy came in search of recruits among this ignorant and combative population, they tried, and tried in vain, when they ranged the Chouans under the white flag, to infuse some larger ideas into the enterprises which had made Chouannerie detested. The Chouans remained a memorable instance of the dangers incurred by stirring up the masses of a half-civilized country.

The scene that the first Breton valley offers to the traveler's eyes, the picture that has been given of the men who composed the detachment of requisitionaries, the description of the gars who appeared on the summit of the Pèlerine, would give altogether an accurate idea of the province and of those who dwelt in it. From those details an expert imagination could construct the theatre and the machinery of war; therein lay all the elements.

Concealed enemies were lurking behind those hedges, with the autumn flowers in them, in every lovely valley. Every field was a fortress, every tree was a snare in disguise, not an old hollow willow trunk but concealed a stratagem. The field of battle lay in all directions. At every corner of the road muskets were lying in wait for the Blues; young girls, smiling as they went, would think it no treachery to lure them under the fire of cannon, and go afterwards with their fathers and brothers on pilgrimage to ask for absolution, and to pray to be inspired with fresh deceits, at the shrine of some carved and gilded Virgin. The religion, or rather the fetichism, of these ignorant folk had deprived murder of all sense of remorse.

So it befell that when the struggle had once begun, there was danger everywhere throughout the length and breadth of the country; in sound as in silence, in pardon or in terror, and by the fireside just as much as on the highroad. They were conscientiously treacherous, these savages who were serving God and the King by making war like Mohicans. Yet if the historian is to give a true and faithful picture of the struggle, in every particular, he ought to add that as soon as Hoche's treaty was signed the whole country became

blithe and friendly at once. Families who had been ready to fly at each other's throats the day before, supped without danger under the same roof.

The moment that Hulot became aware of the treacherous secrets revealed by Marche-à-Terre's goatskin apparel, his conviction was confirmed; the auspicious peace inaugurated through Hoche's ability was now at an end; its longer duration indeed seemed to him impossible. It was in this manner that war broke out again, after three years of inaction, and in a more formidable guise than hitherto. Perhaps the temper of the Revolution, which had grown milder since the Ninth of Thermidor, was about to revert to the ferocity which had made it hateful to every rightly constituted mind. English gold, as usual, contributed to bring about discord in France. If the Republic were abandoned by the young Bonaparte, who seemed to be its tutelary genius, it seemed as if it would be utterly unable to make a stand against so many foes, and the last to appear were the bitterest among them. Civil war, heralded by numberless risings of little importance, assumed a gravity before unknown, from the moment that Chouans conceived the idea of attacking so strong an escort. This, in a concise form, was the substance of Hulot's reflections, when he believed that in Marche-à-Terre's sudden appearance he saw the signs of a skilfully prepared trap. And he alone, for no one else was in the secret of the danger.

The pause which ensued after the commandant's prophetic remark to Gérard, and which put an end to the previous scene, sufficed for Hulot to regain his composure. The veteran's brain had almost reeled; he could not shake off the gloom which covered his brow as he thought that he was even then surrounded by the horrors of a warfare marked by atrocities from which, perhaps, even cannibals would shrink. His captain, Merle, and the adjutant Gérard, both of them friends of his, tried to understand the terror, quite new in their experience, of which their leader's face gave evidence; then they looked at Marche-à-Terre, who was eating his ban-

nock, and could not discern the remotest connection between the brave commandant's uneasiness and this sort of animal at the roadside.

Hulot's face soon cleared, however.

While he deplored the calamities that had befallen the Republic, he was glad at heart that he was to fight for her; he vowed gaily to himself that he would not be gulled by the Chouans, and that he would read this dark intriguing nature that they had done him the honor to send against him. Before making any decision he began to study the place in which his enemies wished to take him at a disadvantage. His thick black eyebrows contracted in a heavy frown as he saw from the middle of the road where he stood that their way lay through a sort of ravine, of no great depth it is true, but with woods on either side, and many footpaths through them. He spoke to his two comrades in a low and very uncertain voice:

"We are in a nice hornet's nest!"

"What is it that you are afraid of?"

"Afraid!" answered the commandant. "Yes, afraid. I have always been afraid of being shot like a dog at some bend in a wood, without so much as a 'Who goes there?' "

"Bah," chuckled Merle, "even a 'Who goes there?' is also a deception."

"We really are in danger then?" asked Gérard, as much amazed now at Hulot's coolness as he had been before at his brief spasm of fear.

"Hush!" said the commandant; "we are in the wolf's den; it is as dark as in an oven in there, and we must strike a light. It is lucky," he went on, "that we occupy the highest ground on this side." He added a vigorous epithet by way of ornament, and went on, "Perhaps I shall end by understanding it clearly enough down there."

The commandant beckoned the two officers, and they made a ring round Marche-à-Terre; the gars pretended to think that he was in the way, and got up promptly.

"Stop where you are, vagabond!" cried Hulot, giving him

a push so that he went down again on to the slope where he had been sitting. From that moment the chief of demi-brigade never took his eyes off the impassive Breton.

"It is time to let you know, my friends," said Hulot, addressing the two officers in low tones, "that they have shut up shop down there. A mighty rummaging has been set up in the Assemblies, and the Directory in consequence has sent a few strokes of the broom our way. Those Pentarchs of Directors—call them Pantaloons, it is better French—have just lost a good sword; Bernadotte has had enough of it."

"Who succeeds him?" asked Gérard eagerly.

"Milet-Mureau, an old pedant. They have pitched on an awkward time for setting numbskulls to pilot us. There are English rockets going up on the coasts: these cockchafers of Vendeans and Chouans about: and the fellows at the back of those marionettes yonder have cleverly selected the moment when we are about to succumb."

"What?" asked Merle.

"Our armies are beaten back at every point," said Hulot, lowering his voice more and more. "The Chouans have intercepted our couriers twice already; my own dispatches and the last decrees issued only reached me by a special express that Bernadotte sent just as he resigned his place in the ministry. Personal friends, fortunately, have written to me about this crisis. Fouché has found out that traitors in Paris have advised the tyrant Louis XVIII. to send a leader to his dupes in the interior. Some think that Barras is a traitor to the Republic. In short, Pitt and the princes have sent a *ci-devant* over here; a strong man and a capable leader, he intends, by combining the efforts of Vendeans and Chouans, to reach the Republic to respect them. The fellow has landed in Morbihan; I knew it before any one else, and I advised those rascals in Paris of his arrival. *The Gars* he has chosen to call himself. All those animals," and he pointed to Marche-à-Terre, "fit themselves up with names that would give any honest patriot the colic if you called him by them. But our man is here in this country, and the appearance of

that Chouan yonder," again he pointed to Marche-à-Terre, "tells me that he is close upon us. But there is no need to teach grimaces to an old monkey, and you will help me now to cage my linnets, and in less than no time. A pretty idiot I should be to let myself be snared like a bird, and that by a *ci-devant* from London, come over here pretending that he wants to dust our jackets."

Thus informed in confidence of the critical state of affairs, the two officers, who knew that their commandant never alarmed himself without good reason, assumed that gravity of expression common to soldiers in pressing danger, who have been thoroughly tempered and have some insight into the ways of mankind. Gérard, whose rank, since suppressed, brought him into close contact with his commandant, made up his mind to reply, and to ask for the rest of the political news which had evidently been passed over; but a sign from Hulot kept him silent, and all three of them fell to scrutinizing Marche-à-Terre.

The Chouan showed not the least sign of agitation at finding himself watched in this way by men as formidable intellectually as they were physically. This sort of warfare was a novelty to the two officers; their curiosity was keenly excited by the opening event, and the whole matter seemed to be invested with an almost romantic interest. They were inclined to joke about it; but at the first word which they let fall, Hulot looked at them sternly and said:

"*Tonnerre de Dieu,* citizens! don't smoke your pipes over a barrel of powder. You might as well amuse yourselves with carrying water in a basket, as by showing courage where it isn't wanted. Gérard," he continued, leaning over, and whispering in the adjutant's ear, "get nearer to the brigand bit by bit, and if he makes the least suspicious movement, run him through the body at once. And I myself will take measures for keeping up the conversation if our unknown friends really have a mind to begin it."

Gérard bent his head slightly in obedience. Then he began to look round at different points in the landscape of the val-

ley, with which the reader has had an opportunity of making himself familiar. He appeared to wish to study them more closely, stepping back upon himself, so to speak, quite naturally; but the landscape, it will well be believed, was the last thing he had in view. Marche-à-Terre, on the other hand, took no heed whatever of the officer's manœuvres. One might have supposed that he was fishing in the ditch with a rod and line, from the way he played with his whip handle.

While Gérard was trying in this way to take up his position by the Chouan, the commandant spoke in a low voice to Merle.

"Take ten picked men and a sergeant, and post them yourself up above us, just on that part of the summit on this side where the road widens and makes a kind of plateau; you could see a good long stretch of the road to Ernée from the place. Pick out a spot where there are no woods on either side of the road, so that the sergeant can keep a lookout over the country round. Take Clef-des-Cœurs; he has his wits about him. This is no laughing matter at all; I would not give a penny for our skins if we don't take every advantage we can get."

Captain Merle understood the importance of prompt action, and the manœuvre was executed at once. Then the commandant waved his right hand, demanding absolute silence from his men, who stood round about amusing themselves with chat. He signed to them afresh to shoulder arms, and as soon as everything was quiet again, his eyes traveled from one side of the road to the other; he seemed in hope to detect muffled sounds of weapons or of footsteps, preliminaries of the looked-for struggle, and to be listening anxiously for them. His keen black eyes appeared to penetrate the very depths of the woods in a marvelous way. No sign was forthcoming. He consulted the sand on the road, as savages do, trying every means by which he could discover the invisible foes, whose audacity was known to him.

In despair at finding nothing which justified his fears, he went towards the side of the road, climbed with some diffi-

culty up the bank, and went deliberately along the top of it. Suddenly he felt how largely his own experience conduced to the safety of his detachment, and he came down again. His face grew darker, for leaders in those days were wont to regret that they could not reserve the most dangerous missions for themselves alone. The other officers and the men noticed their leader's preoccupied mood. They liked him. The courage of his character was recognized among them; so they knew that this exceeding caution on his part meant that danger was at hand. How serious it was they could not possibly suspect; so, though they remained motionless and scarcely drew their breath, it was done intuitively. The soldiers looked by turns along the valley of the Couësnon, at the woods along the road, and at their commandant's stern face, trying to gather what their fate was to be, much as the dogs try to guess what the experienced sportsman means who gives them some order which they cannot understand. They looked at each other's eyes, and a smile spread from mouth to mouth.

As Hulot made his peculiar grimace, Beau-Pied, a young sergeant, who was regarded as the wit of the company, said in a low voice:

"What the devil have we run ourselves into to make that old dragoon of a Hulot turn such a muddy face on us? He looks like a whole council of war."

Hulot flung a stern glance at Beau-Pied, and forthwith there was a sudden accession of the silence required of men under arms. In the middle of this awful pause the lagging footsteps of the conscripts were heard. The gravel under their feet gave out a dull monotonous sound that added a vague disagreeable feeling to the general anxiety, an indescribable feeling that can only be understood by those who, in the silence of night, have been victims of a terrible suspense, and have felt their hearts beat heavily with redoubled quickness at some monotonous recurring noise which has seemed to pour terror through them drop by drop. The commandant reached the middle of the road again. He was

beginning to ask himself, "Am I deceived?" His rage concentrated itself already upon Marche-à-Terre and his stolid tranquillity; it flashed in his eyes like lightning as he looked at him; but he discerned a savage irony in the Chouan's sullen gaze that convinced him that it would be better not to discontinue his precautionary measures. His captain, Merle, came up to him just then, after having executed Hulot's orders. The mute actors in this scene, which was like so many another that was to make this war one of the most dramatic ever known, were looking out impatiently for new sensations, curious to see any fresh manœuvres that should throw a light on obscure points of the military position, for their benefit.

"Captain," said the commandant, "we did well to put the small number of patriots that we can depend upon among the requisitionaries at the rear of the detachment. Take another dozen of stout fellows and put Sub-lieutenant Lebrun at the head of them; take them down quickly yourself to the rear of the detachment; they will support the patriots down there, and they will make the whole troop of rascals move on, and quickly too, and bring them up to the level of our own men in no time. I am waiting for you."

The captain disappeared among the troop. The commandant looked out four resolute men, whom he knew to be alert and active, and called them by a gesture only; he tapped his nose with his forefinger, and then pointed to each in turn by way of a friendly sign. The four approached him. "You served with me under Hoche," said he, "when we gave these scoundrels who call themselves *Chasseurs du Roi* a lesson, and you know their ways of hiding themselves so as to pepper the Blues!"

All four soldiers held up their heads and pressed their lips together significantly at this praise of their quick-wittedness. There was a reckless acquiescence in the soldierly heroic faces which showed that since the beginning of the struggle between France and Europe, their thoughts had scarcely strayed beyond the limits of the cartridge pouch at

their backs and the bayonet they carried in front. They stood with pursed-up mouths, looking curiously and attentively at the commandant.

"Very well," went on Hulot, who in an eminent degree possessed the art of speaking in the soldier's picturesque language, "stout fellows, such as we are, must never allow the Chouans to make fools of us; and there are Chouans about, or my name is not Hulot. Be off, the four of you, and beat up either side of the road. The detachment is going to slip its cable; keep well alongside of it. Try not to hand in your checks, and clear up this business for me. Sharp!"

He pointed out the dangerous heights above the road. By way of thanks, all four raised the backs of their hands before their old cocked hats; the turned-up brims, weather-beaten now and limp with age, had fallen over the crowns. One of them, Larose by name, a corporal that Hulot knew, said as he made the muzzle of his gun ring on the ground:

"They shall have a solo on the clarionet, commandant."

They set out, two of them to the right, and the others to the left. It was not without an inward tremor that the company saw them disappear on either side of the way. The commandant shared in this anxiety; he believed that he had sent them to a certain death. He shuddered in spite of himself when he saw their hats no longer, and both officers and men heard the sound of their footsteps on the dead leaves gradually dying away with a feeling all the more acutely painful for being hidden so far beneath the surface. In war there are scenes like these, when four men sent into jeopardy cause more consternation than the thousands of corpses stretched upon the field at Jemappes. So many and so fleeting are the expressions of the military physiognomy, that those who would fain depict them are obliged to call up memories of soldiers in the past, and to leave it to non-combatants to study their dramatic figures, for these stormy times were so rich in detail that any complete description of them could only be made at interminable length.

Just as the gleam of the bayonets of the four soldiers was no longer visible, Captain Merle came back after executing the commandant's orders with lightning speed. With two or three words of command Hulot set the rest of his troop in order of battle in the middle of the road; then he gave the word to regain the summit of the Pèlerine, where his little advance guard was posted, and he himself followed last of all, walking backwards, so that he might see the slightest change that should come over any of the principal points in that view which nature had made so enchanting, and man, so full of terrors.

Marche-à-Terre had followed all the commandant's manœuvres with indifferent eyes, but he had watched the two soldiers as they penetrated the woods that lay to the right with incredible keenness; and now, as Hulot reached the spot where Gérard stood on guard over him, Marche-à-Terre began to whistle two or three times in a way that imitated the shrill, far-reaching cry of the screech-owl.

The three notorious smugglers whose names have been already mentioned used to employ some of the notes of that cry at night to give warning of an ambush, of danger, or of anything else that concerned them. In this way the nickname *Chuin* arose, which, in the dialect of the country, means an owl, or screech-owl. A corruption of the word served to designate those who in the previous war had adopted the tactics and signals of the three brothers, so that when he heard the suspicious whistle the commandant stopped and fixed his gaze on Marche-à-Terre. He affected to be deceived by the Chouan's appearance of imbecility, that he might keep him at his side as a kind of barometer to indicate the enemy's movements. So he caught Gérard's hand as it was raised to dispatch the Chouan, and posted two soldiers a few paces away from the spy, ordering them in loud and distinct tones to be ready to shoot him down if he attempted to make the slightest signal of any kind. In spite of his imminent peril, Marche-à-Terre showed no sort of perturbation, and the commandant, who was studying him, noticed this indifference.

"The chap isn't up to everything," he said to Gérard. "Aha! it is not so easy to read a Chouan's face; but this fellow's wish to exhibit his intrepidity has betrayed him. If he had shammed fright, Gérard, I should have taken him for a nincompoop, you see; and there would have been a pair of us, he and I. I had come to the end of my tether. Ah, we shall be attacked! But let them come; I am ready now!"

The old soldier rubbed his hands triumphantly when he had muttered these words, and looked maliciously at Marche-à-Terre; then he locked his arms over his chest, took his stand in the middle of the road between his two favorite officers, and awaited the result of the measures he had taken. Sure of the issue, he looked his men over calmly.

"Oho! we are going to have a row," said Beau-Pied in a low voice; "the commandant is rubbing his hands."

Commandant Hulot and his detachment found themselves in one of those critical positions where life is really at stake, and when men of energetic character feel themselves in honor bound to show coolness and self-possession. Such times bring a man to the final test. The commandant, therefore, who knew the danger better than any of his officers, prided himself on appearing the coolest person present. With his eyes fixed alternately on the woods, the roadway, and Marche-à-Terre, he was expecting the general onslaught of the Chouans (who, as he believed, lay concealed all about them like goblins), with an unmoved face, but not without inward anguish. Just as the men's eyes were all turned upon his, slight creases appeared in the brown cheeks with the scars of smallpox upon them, the commandant screwed his lip sharply up to one side, blinked his eyes, a grimace which was understood to be a smile by his men, then he clapped Gérard on the shoulder, saying:

"Now we have time to talk. What were you going to say to me just now?"

"What new crisis have we here, commandant?"

"It is nothing new," he answered in a low voice; "all Europe has a chance against us this time. Whilst the Direc-

tors are squabbling among themselves like horses left in the stable without any oats, and are letting the government go all to pieces, they leave their armies unsupported. We are utterly ruined in Italy. Yes, my friends, we have evacuated Mantua on the top of the disasters at la Trebbia, and Joubert has just lost the battle of Novi. I only hope Masséna will guard the Swiss passes, for Suwarroff is overrunning the country. We are beaten along the Rhine. Moreau has been sent out there by the Directory. He is a fine fellow, but is he going to keep the frontier? I wish he may, I am sure; but the coalition will crush us altogether at last, and unluckily the one general who could save us has gone to the devil down there in Egypt! And how is he to get back moreover? England is mistress of the seas."

"Bonaparte's absence does not trouble me, commandant," said Gérard, his young adjutant, whose superior faculties had been developed by a careful education. "Is our Revolution to end like that? We are bound to do more than merely defend the soil of France; ours is a double mission. Ought we not to keep alive the very soul of our country, the generous principles of liberty and independence, that human reason evoked by our Assemblies, which is winning its way, I hope, little by little? France is like a traveler with a light in her keeping; she must carry it in one hand and defend herself with the other; if your news is well founded, for these ten years past we have never been surrounded by so many who would seek to blow it out. Our doctrines and our country, all alike are about to perish."

"Alas, yes!" sighed the commandant Hulot. "Those mountebanks of Directors have managed to quarrel with all the men who could have steered the vessel—Bernadotte, Carnot, and every one else down to citizen Talleyrand has abandoned us. There is only one good patriot left in fact, our friend Fouché, who has everything in his hands by police supervision. There is a man for you! He it was, too, who gave me warning in time of this insurrection. For all that, here we are in some pitfall or other, I am positive."

"Oh, if the army did not interfere a little in the government," said Gérard, "the lawyers would put us back in a worse position than we were in before the Revolution. Do those wretches understand how to make themselves obeyed?"

"I am always in fear that I shall hear of their treating with the Bourbon princes. *Tonnerre de Dieu!* If they came to an understanding, what a fix some of the rest of us would be in out here."

"No, no, commandant; we shall not come to that," said Gérard. "As you say, the army would make its voice heard; and so that the army does not pick its words out of Pichegru's dictionary, we shall not have been cutting ourselves to pieces for ten years, I hope, over carding the flax for others to spin."

"Well," said Captain Merle, "let us always conduct ourselves here like good patriots, and try to cut off the Chouan communications with la Vendée; for if once they hear that England has a finger in the matter, I would not answer for the cap of our Republic, one and indivisible."

Just then the cry of a screech-owl, heard from some considerable distance, interrupted the conversation. Still more uneasily the commandant again furtively scrutinized Marche-à-Terre; there was no sign of animation, so to speak, in his stolid face. The recruits, drawn up together by one of the officers, were mustered like a herd of cattle in the crown of the road, some thirty paces from the troops in order of battle. Behind them again, at the distance of some ten paces, came the soldiers and patriots commanded by Lieutenant Lebrun. The commandant ran his eyes over this array, and gave a last glance at the picket posted in advance up the road. Satisfied with this disposition of his forces, he turned to give the order to march, when he saw the tricolor cockades of two of his scouts returning from the search of the woods that lay on the left. As he saw no sign whatever of the two sent to reconnoitre the right-hand woods, the commandant determined to wait for them.

"Perhaps the trouble is coming from that quarter," he

remarked to his two officers as he pointed out the woods which seemed to have swallowed up his two *enfants perdus*.

While the two scouts were making some sort of report, Hulot ceased to watch Marche-à-Terre. The Chouan began again to give a sharp whistle, a cry so shrill that it could be heard a long way off; and then, before either of his guards so much as saw what he was after, he dealt them each a blow from his whip-handle that stretched them on the roadside. All at once answering cries, or rather savage yells, startled the Republicans. A terrible fire was opened upon them from the wood that crowned the slope where the Chouan had been sitting, and seven or eight of their men fell. Five or six soldiers had taken aim at Marche-à-Terre, but none of them hit him. He had climbed the slope with the agility of a wild cat and disappeared in the woods above. His sabots rolled down into the ditch, and it was easy then to see upon his feet the great iron-bound shoes which were always worn by the *Chasseurs du Roi*. At the first alarm given by the Chouans, all the recruits had made a dash for it into the woods on the right, like a flock of birds scared by the approach of a passer-by.

"Fire on those rascals!" roared the commandant.

The company fired, but the recruits were well able to screen themselves from the musket-shots. Every man set his back against a tree, and before the muskets had been reloaded, they were all out of sight.

"Issue warrants for a Departmental Legion, eh?" Hulot said to Gérard. "One would have to be as big a fool as a Director to put any dependence on a requisition from this district. The Assemblies would show more sense if they would send us clothing, and money, and ammunition, and give up voting reinforcements."

"These swine like their bannocks better than ammunition bread," said Beau-Pied, the wag of the company.

At his words, hooting and yells of derisive laughter went up from the Republican troops, crying shame on the deserters, but a sudden silence followed all at once. The soldiers

saw the two scouts who had been sent by the commandant to search the woods on the right, painfully toiling down the slope, the less injured man supporting his comrade, whose blood drenched the earth. The two poor fellows had scarcely reached the middle of the bank when Marche-à-Terre showed his hideous face. His aim was so certain that, with one shot, he hit them both, and they rolled heavily down into the ditch. His huge head had barely shown itself before the muzzles of some thirty muskets were leveled at him; but he had disappeared like a phantom behind the ominous gorse bushes. All these things, which it takes so many words to describe, came to pass almost in a moment; and in a moment more, the patriots and soldiers of the rear-guard came up with the rest of the escort.

"Forward!" shouted Hulot.

The company rapidly gained the high and exposed position where the picket had been placed. The commandant then drew up his forces in order of battle, but he saw no further hostile demonstration on the part of the Chouans, and thought that the sole object of the ambuscade was the deliverance of his conscripts.

"Their cries tell me that they are not in great force. Let us march double-quick. We may possibly get to Ernée before we have them down upon us."

A patriot conscript overheard the words, left the ranks, and stood before Hulot.

"General," said he, "I've seen some of this sort of fighting before as a Counter-Chouan. May I put in a word or two?"

"Here's one of these barrack-lawyers," the commandant muttered in Merle's ears; "they always think they are on for nearing. Go on; argue away," he added to the young man from Fougères.

"Commandant, the Chouans have brought arms, of course, for those men that they have just recruited. If we have to run for it now, they will be waiting for us at every turn in the woods, and will pick us off to a man before we can get to Ernée. We must argue, as you say, but it must be with

cartridges; then, during the skirmish, which will last longer than you look for, one of us could go for the National Guard and the Free Companies stationed at Fougères. We may be conscripts, but you shall see by that time that we are not carrion-kites."

"Then you think the Chouans are here in some force!"

"Judge for yourself, citizen-commandant."

He led Hulot to a spot on the plateau where the sand had been disturbed, as if a rake had been over it; and, after calling Hulot's attention to this, led him some little way along a footpath where traces of the passage of a large body of men were distinctly visible. Leaves had been trodden right into the trampled earth.

"That will be the gars from Vitré," said the Fougerais; "they have gone to join the Bas-Normands."

"What is your name, citizen?" asked Hulot.

"Gudin, commandant."

"Well, then, Gudin, I shall make you corporal of your townsmen here. You are a long-headed fellow, it seems to me. I leave it to you to pick out one of your comrades, who must be sent to Fougères, and you yourself will keep close beside me. But, first, there are these two poor comrades of ours that those brigands have laid out on the road there—you and some of your conscripts can go and take their guns, and clothes, and cartridge-boxes. You shall not stop here to take shots without returning them."

The brave Fougerais went to strip the dead, protected by an energetic fire kept up upon the woods by the whole company. It had its effect, for the party returned without losing a man.

"These Bretons will make good soldiers," said Hulot to Gérard, "if their mess happens to take their fancy."

Gudin's messenger set out at a trot down a pathway that turned off to the left through the woods. The soldiers, absorbed in examining their weapons, prepared for the coming struggle. The commandant passed them in review, smiled encouragingly, and, placing himself with his two favorite

officers a step or two in advance, awaited the onset of the Chouans with composure.

Silence prevailed again, but it was only for a moment. Then three hundred Chouans, dressed exactly like the requisitionaries, issued from the woods to the right. They came on in no order, uttering fearful cries, and occupied the width of the road before the little battalion of Blues. The commandant divided his troops into two equal parts, each part presenting a front of ten men to the enemy. Between these divisions, and in the centre, he placed himself at the head of his band of twelve hastily equipped conscripts. The little army was protected by two wings of twenty-five men each, under the command of Gérard and Merle. These officers were to take the Chouans adroitly in flank, and to prevent them from scattering about the country—*s'égailler* they call the movement in the *patois* of this district, when every peasant would take up his position where he could shoot at the Blues without exposing himself, and the Republican troops were utterly at a loss to know where to have their enemies.

These arrangements, made with the rapidity demanded by the circumstances, seemed to infuse the commandant's self-reliance into the men, and all advanced upon the Chouans in silence. At the end of the few seconds needed for the two bodies of men to approach each other, there was a sudden discharge at close quarters which scattered death through either rank; but in a moment the Republican wings had wheeled and taken the Chouans in flank. These latter had no means of opposing them, and the hot, pertinacious fire of their enemies spread death and disorder in their midst. This manœuvre nearly redressed the balance of the numbers on either side; but the courage and firmness of the Chouan character was equal to all tests. They did not give way; their losses did not shake them; they closed their ranks and tried to surround the little, dark, compact lines of Blues, who appeared in the narrow space they occupied like a queen bee in the midst of a swarm.

Then they engaged in one of those horrible struggles at

close quarters, when the rattle of musketry almost ceases, and the click of the bayonets is heard instead, and the ranks meet man to man; and, courage being equal on either side, the victory is won by sheer force of numbers. At first the Chouans would have carried all before them if the two wings under Merle and Gérard had not brought two or three volleys to bear slantwise on the enemy's rear. By rights the two wings should have stayed where they were, and continued to pick off their formidable foes in this adroit manner; but the sight of the heroic battalion, now hemmed in on all sides by the *Chasseurs du Roi*, excited them. They flung themselves like madmen into the struggle on the roadway, bayonet in hand, and redressed the balance again for a few moments. Both sides gave themselves up to a furious zeal, aggravated by the ferocious cruelty of party-spirit that made this war an exception. Each became absorbed by his own peril, and was silent. The place seemed chill and dark with death. The only sounds that broke the silence, and rose above the clash of weapons and the grating noise of the gravel underfoot, were the deep, hollow groans of those who fell badly wounded, or of the dying as they lay. In the Republican centre the dozen conscripts defended the person of the commandant (who issued continual warnings and orders manifold) with such courage that more than once a soldier here and there had cried, "Bravo, conscripts!"

Hulot, the imperturbable and wide-awake, soon noticed among the Chouans a man, also surrounded by picked troops, who appeared to be their leader. It seemed to him very needful to make quite sure of this officer; now and again he made efforts to distinguish his features, hidden by a crowd of broad hats and red caps, and in this way he recognised Marche-à-Terre beside the officer, repeating his orders in a hoarse voice, while he kept his carbine in constant use. Hulot grew tired of the repeated annoyance. He drew his sword, encouraged his requisitionaries, and dashed so furiously upon the Chouan centre that he penetrated their ranks and caught a glimpse of the officer, whose face, un-

luckily, was hidden by a large felt hat with a white cockade. But the stranger, taken somewhat aback by this bold onset, suddenly raised his hat. Hulot seized the opportunity to make a rapid survey of his opponent.

The young chief, who seemed to Hulot to be about twenty-five years of age, wore a short green cloth shooting coat. The white sash at his waist held pistols, the heavy shoes he wore were bound with iron like those of the Chouans; gaiters reaching to the knee, and breeches of some coarse material, completed the costume. He was of middle height, but well and gracefully made. In his anger at seeing the Blues so near to him, he thrust on his hat again and turned towards them, but Marche-à-Terre and others of his party surrounded him at once, in alarm. Still through gaps in the crowd of faces that pressed about the young man and came between them, Hulot felt sure he saw a broad red ribbon on the officer's unfastened coat, that showed the wearer to be a Knight Commander of the Order of St. Louis. The commandant's eyes, at first attracted by the long-forgotten royal decoration, were turned next upon a face, which he lost sight of again in a moment, for the risks of battle compelled him to watch closely over the safety and the movements of his own little band. He had scarcely time to see the color of the sparkling eyes, but the fair hair and delicately cut features tanned by the sun did not escape him, nor the gleam of a bare neck that seemed all the whiter by contrast with a loosely knotted black scarf. There was the enthusiasm and excitement of a soldier in the bearing of the young leader, and of a type of soldier for whom a certain dramatic element seems desirable in a fight. The hand that swung the sword-blade aloft in the sunlight was well-gloved, vigor was expressed in the face, and a certain refinement also in a like degree. In his high-wrought exaltation, set off by all the charms of youth and graciousness of manner, he seemed to be a fair ideal type of the French noblesse; while Hulot, not four paces from him, might have been the embodiment of the energetic Republic

for whom the veteran was fighting. His stern face, his blue uniform faced with the worn red facings, the grimy epaulettes that hung back over his shoulders, expressed the character and the deficiencies of their owner.

The graceful attitude and expression of the younger man were not lost upon Hulot, who shouted as he tried to reach him:

"Here you, ballet-dancer! come a little nearer, so that I may get a chance at you!"

The Royalist leader, irritated by the momentary check, made a desperate forward movement; but the moment his own men saw the danger he was thus incurring, they all flung themselves upon the Blues. A clear, sweet voice suddenly rang out upon the din of conflict:

"Here it was that the sainted Lescure fell! Will you not avenge him?"

At these magical words the Chouan onset became terrible; the little troop of Republican soldiers kept their line unbroken with the greatest difficulty.

"If he had not been a youngster," said Hulot to himself, as he gave way step by step, "we should not have been attacked at all. When did Chouans offer battle before? But so much the better, they won't shoot us down like dogs along the road."

He raised his voice till the woods echoed with the words:

"Come, look alive, men; are we going to let ourselves be fooled by these bandits?"

The verb is but a feeble substitute for that of the gallant commander's choice, but old hands will be able to insert the genuine word, which certainly possesses a more soldierly flavor.

"Gérard, Merle," the commandant continued, "call in your men, form them in columns, and fall on their rear, fire on these curs, and make an end of them!"

Hulot's orders were carried out with great difficulty; for the young chief heard the voice of his antagonist, and shouted:

"Saint-Anne of Auray! Don't let them get away! Scatter yourselves, my gars!"

As either wing commanded by Merle and Gérard withdrew from the thick of the fray, each little column was pertinaciously followed by Chouans in greatly superior numbers. The old goatskins surrounded the men under Merle and Gérard on all sides, once more uttering those threatening cries of theirs, like the howls of wild beasts.

"Silence, gentlemen!" shouted Beau-Pied; "we can't hear ourselves being killed."

The joke put fresh heart into the Blues.

The fighting was no longer concentrated upon a single point, the Republicans defended themselves in three different places on the plateau of the Pèlerine, and the valleys, so quiet hitherto, re-echoed with the sound of the firing. Hours might have passed and left the issue still undecided, or the struggle might have come to an end for lack of combatants. The courage of Blues and Chouans was evenly matched, and the fierce desire of battle was surging as it were from the one side to the other, when far away and faintly there sounded the tap of a drum, and from the direction of the sound the corps that it heralded must be crossing the valley of the Couësnon.

"That is the National Guard from Fougères!" cried Gudin; "Vannier must have fallen in with them!"

His voice reached the young leader and his ferocious aide-de-camp; the Royalists began to give way; but a cry like a wild beast's from Marche-à-Terre promptly checked them. Two or three orders were given in a low voice by the chief, and translated by Marche-à-Terre into Bas-Breton for the Chouans; and the retreat began, conducted with a skill which baffled the Republicans, and even their commandant. In the first place, such of the Chouans as were not disabled drew up in line at the word, and presented a formidable front to the enemy, while the wounded and the remainder of them fell behind to load their guns. Then all at once, with a swiftness of which Marche-à-Terre had given an example,

the wounded from the rear gained the summits of the bank on the right side of the road, and were followed thither by half of the remaining Chouans, who clambered nimbly up, and manned the top of the bank, only their energetic heads being visible to the Blues below. Once there, they made a sort of rampart of the trees, and thence they brought the barrels of their guns to bear upon the remnant of the escort, who had rapidly drawn up in obedience to repeated orders from Hulot, in such a way as to present a front equal to that of the Chouans, who were still occupying the road. These last fell back, still disputing the ground, and wheeled so as to bring themselves under cover of the fire of their own party. When they reached the ditch which lay by the roadside, they scrambled in their turn up the steep slope, whose top was held by their own comrades, and so rejoined them, steadily supporting the murderous fire of the Republicans, which filled the ditch with dead bodies, the men from the height of the scarp replying the while with a fire no less deadly.

Just then the National Guard from Fougères arrived at a run on the scene of the conflict, and with their presence the affair was at an end A few excited soldiers and the National Guards were leaving the footpath to follow them up in the woods, but the commandant called to them in his soldier's voice, "Do you want to be cut to bits over there?"

They came up with the Republican troops, who were left in possession of the field indeed, but only after heavy losses. Then all the old hats went aloft on the points of their bayonets, while every soldier's voice cried twice over, "Long live the Republic!" Even the wounded men lying by the roadside shared alike in the enthusiasm, and Hulot squeezed his lieutenant's hand as he said:

"One might call that pluck, eh?"

Merle was ordered to bury the dead in a ravine by the wayside. Carts and horses were requisitioned from neighboring farms for the wounded, whom their comrades hastened to lay on the clothing taken from the dead. Before

they set out, the National Guard from Fougères brought a Chouan to Hulot; the man was dangerously wounded, and had been found lying exhausted at the foot of the slope, up which his party had made their escape.

"Thanks for this prompt stroke of yours, citizens," said the commandant. *"Tonnerre de Dieu!* we should have had a bad quarter of an hour but for you. You must look out for yourselves now; the war has broken out in earnest. Good-day, gentlemen!"

Hulot turned to his prisoner.

"What is your general's name?"

"The Gars."

"Who? Marche-à-Terre?"

"No, the Gars."

"And where does the Gars come from?"

To this question the *Chasseur du Roi* made no reply; his wild, weather-beaten face was drawn with pain; he took his beads and began to mutter a prayer.

"The Gars is that young *ci-devant* with the black cravat, no doubt. He has been sent over here by the Tyrant and his allies Pitt and Cobourg——"

Here the Chouan, who had so far seemed unconscious of what was going on, raised his head at the words to say proudly:

"Sent by God and the King!"

The energy with which he spoke exhausted his strength. The commandant turned away with a frown. He saw the difficulty of interrogating a dying man, a man, moreover, who bore signs of a gloomy fanaticism in every line of his face. Two of his men stepped forward and took aim at the Chouan; they were friends of the two poor fellows whom Marche-à-Terre had dispatched so brutally with a blow from his whip at the outset, for both were lying dead at the road-side. The Chouan's steady eyes did not flinch before the barrels of the muskets that they pointed at him, although they fired close to his face. He fell; but when the men came up to strip the corpse, he shouted again for the last time, "Long live the King!"

"All right, curmudgeon," said Clef-des-Cœurs. "Be off to your Holy Virgin and get your supper Didn't he come back and say to our faces, 'Long live the Tyrant,' when we thought it was all over with him?"

"Here, sir," said Beau-Pied; "here are the brigand's papers."

"Look here, though," cried Clef-des-Cœurs; "here's a fellow been enlisted by the Saints above; he wears their badge here on his chest!"

Hulot and some others made a group round the Chouan's naked body, and saw upon the dead man's breast a flaming heart tattooed in a bluish color, a token that the wearer had been initiated into the Brotherhood of the Sacred Heart. Under the symbol Hulot made out *"Marie Lambrequin,"* evidently the Chouan's own name.

"You see that, Clef-des-Cœurs?" asked Beau-Pied. "Well, you would guess away for a century and never find out what that part of his accoutrements means."

"How should *I* know about the Pope's uniforms?" replied Clef-des-Cœurs.

"You good-for-nothing flint-crusher, will you never be any wiser? Can't you see that they promised the chap there that he should come to life again? He painted his gizzard so as to be known by it." There was some ground for the witticism. Hulot himself could not help joining in the general laughter that followed.

By this time Merle had buried the dead, and the wounded had been laid in the carts as carefully as might be. The other soldiers formed in a double file, one on either side of the improvised ambulance wagons, and in this manner they went down the other side of the mountain, the outlook over Maine before their eyes, and the lovely valley of the Pèlerine, which rivals that of the Couësnon. Hulot and his two friends Merle and Gérard followed slowly after the men, wishing that they might, without further mishap, reach Ernée, where the wounded could be attended to.

This engagement, though scarcely heard of in France,

where great events were even then taking place, attracted some attention in the West, where this second rising filled every one's thoughts. A change was remarked in the methods adopted by the Chouans in the opening of the war: never before had they attacked so considerable a body of troops. Hulot's conjectures led him to suppose that the young Royalist whom he had seen must be "the Gars," a new general sent over to France by the princes, and that his own name and title were concealed after the custom of Royalist leaders by that kind of nickname which is called a *nom-de-guerre*. This circumstance made him as uneasy after his dubious victory as he had been on his first suspicion of an ambuscade; more than once he turned to look at the plateau of La Pèlerine, which he was leaving behind, while even yet at intervals the faint sound of a drum reached him, for the National Guard was going down the valley of the Couësnon, while they themselves were descending the valley of La Pèlerine.

"Can either of you suggest their motive for attacking us?" he began abruptly, addressing his two friends. "Fighting is a kind of trade in musket shots for them, and I cannot see that they have made anything in our case. They must have lost at least a hundred men; while we," he added, screwing up his right cheek, and winking his eyes by way of a smile, "have not lost sixty By Heaven, I can't understand the speculation! The rogues need never have attacked us at all. We should have gone past the place like letters by the post, and I can't see what good it did them to make holes in our fellows."

He pointed dejectedly to the wounded as he spoke. "May be they wanted to wish us good-day," he added.

"But they have secured a hundred and fifty of our lambs," said Merle, thinking of the recruits.

"The requisitionaries could have hopped off into the woods like frogs; we should not have gone in to fish them out again, at any rate not after a volley or two. No, no," went on Hulot; "there is something more behind."

He turned again to look at La Pèlerine.

"Stay," he cried; "look there!"

Far away as they were from the unlucky plateau by this time, the practised eyes of the three officers easily made out Marche-à-Terre and others in possession of the place.

"Quick march!" cried Hulot to his troop. "Stir your shanks and make those horses move on faster than that. Are their legs frozen? Have the beasts also been sent over by Pitt and Cobourg?" The pace of the little troop was quickened by the words.

"I hope to Heaven we shall not have to clear up this mystery at Ernée with powder and ball," he said to the two officers; "it is too dark a business for me to see through readily. I am afraid we shall be told that the king's subjects have cut off our communications with Mayenne."

The very strategical problem which made Hulot's moustache bristle, gave anxiety, no whit less keen, to the men whom he had discovered upon the summit of La Pèlerine. The drum of the National Guard from Fougères was hardly out of earshot, the Blues had only reached the bottom of the long steep road below, when Marche-à-Terre cheerfully gave the cry of the screech owl again, and the Chouans reappeared, but in smaller numbers. Some of them must have been occupied in bandaging the wounded at the village of La Pèlerine, on the side of the hills overlooking the valley of the Couësnon Two or three *Chasseurs du Roi* came up to Marche-à-Terre.

Four paces away the young noble sat musing on a granite boulder, absorbed by the numerous thoughts to which his difficult enterprise gave rise in him. Marche-à-Terre shaded the sun from his eyes with his hand as he dejectedly followed the progress of the Republicans down the valley of La Pèlerine. His small keen black eyes were trying to discover what was passing on the horizon where the road left the valley for the opposite side.

"The Blues will intercept the mail," said one of the chiefs sullenly, who stood nearest to Marche-à-Terre.

"By St. Anne of Auray!" asked another, "why did you make us fight? To save your own skin?"

Marche-à-Terre's glance at the speaker was full of malignity; he rapped the butt of his heavy carbine on the ground. "Am I in command?" said he. Then after a pause he went on, "If all of you had fought as I did, not one of the Blues would have escaped," and he pointed to the remnant of Hulot's detachment below, "and perhaps then the coach would have come through as far as here."

"Do you suppose," asked a third speaker, "that the idea of escorting it, or stopping it either, would have crossed their minds if we had let them pass peaceably? You wanted to save your own hide, you that would have it the Blues were not on the march. He must save his own bacon," he went on, turning to the others, "and the rest of us must bleed for it, and we are like to lose twenty thousand francs in good gold coin besides."

"Bacon yourself!" cried Marche-à-Terre, drawing back and bringing his carbine to bear on his adversary. "It's not that you hate the Blues, but that you are fond of money. You shall die without confession, do you hear? A damned rascal that hasn't taken the sacrament this twelvemonth past."

The Chouan turned white with rage at this insult, a deep growl came from his chest as he raised his musket and pointed it at Marche-à-Terre. The young leader rushed between them, knocked the firearms out of their hands by striking up their weapons with the stock of his carbine, and demanded an explanation of the quarrel. The dispute had been carried on in Bas-Breton, with which he was not very familiar.

Marche-à-Terre explained, and ended his discourse with, "It's the more shame to them that bear a grudge against me, my lord Marquis, for I left Pille-Miche behind, and very likely he will keep the coach out of these robbers' clutches." He pointed to the Blues, for these faithful defenders of altar and throne were all brigands and murderers of Louis XVI.

"What?" cried the young man angrily. "Do you mean to say you are waiting here to stop a coach? You cowards, who could not gain the victory in the first encounter with me for your commander! How is victory possible with such intentions? So those who fight for God and the King are pillagers? By St. Anne of Auray! we are making war on the Republic and not on diligences. Any one guilty of such disgraceful actions in future will not be pardoned, and shall not benefit by the favors destined for brave and faithful servants of the King."

A murmur like a growl arose from the band. It was easy to see that the authority of the new leader, never very sure over these undisciplined troops, had been compromised. Nothing of this was lost upon the young man, who cast about him for a means of saving his orders from discredit, when the sound of approaching horse-hoofs broke the silence. Every head was turned in the direction whence the sound seemed to come. A young woman appeared, mounted sideways upon a little horse, her pace quickened to a gallop as soon as she saw the young man.

"What is the matter?" she asked, looking by turns at the chief and the assembled Chouans.

"Would you believe it, madame, they are waiting to plunder the coach that runs between Mayenne and Fougères, just as we have liberated our gars from Fougères in a skirmish which has cost us a good many lives, without our being able to demolish the Blues."

"Very well, but where is the harm?" asked the young lady, whose woman's tact had revealed the secret of this scene to her. "You have lost some men, you say; we shall never run short of them. The mail is carrying money, and we are always short of that. We will bury our men, who will go to heaven, and we will take the money, which will go into the pockets of these good fellows. What is the objection?"

Every face among the Chouans beamed with approval at her words.

"Is there nothing in this to make you blush?" said the young man in a low voice. "Are you in such straits for money that you have to take the road for it?"

"I am so in want of it, Marquis, that I could put my heart in pledge for it, I think, if it were still in my keeping," she said, smiling coquettishly at him. "Where can you come from to think of employing Chouans without allowing them to plunder the Blues now and again? Don't you know the proverb, 'Thievish as an owl,' and what else is a Chouan? Besides," she went on, raising her voice, "is it not a righteous action? Have not the Blues robbed us, and taken the property of the Church?"

Again a murmur from the Chouans greeted her words, a very different sound from the growl with which they had answered the Marquis. The color on the young man's brow grew darker, he stepped a little aside with the lady, and began with the lively petulance of a well-bred man:

"Will these gentlemen come to the Vivetière on the appointed day?"

"Yes," she answered, "all of them, l'Intimé, Grand Jacques, and possibly Ferdinand."

"Then permit me to return thither, for I cannot sanction such brigandage by my presence. Yes, madame, I say it is brigandage. A noble may allow himself to be robbed, but——"

"Very well, then," she broke in; "I shall have your share, and I am obliged to you for giving it up to me. The prize money will put me in funds. My mother has delayed sending money to me for so long that I am fairly desperate."

"Good-bye," said the Marquis, and he disappeared. The lady hurried quickly after him.

"Why won't you stay with me?" she asked, with a glance half tyrannous, half tender; such a glance as a woman gives to a man over whom she exerts a claim, when she desires to make her wishes known to him.

"Are you not going to plunder the coach?"

"Plunder?" she repeated; "what a strange expression! Let me explain——"

"Not a word," he said, taking both her hands and kissing them with a courtier's ready gallantry. "Listen to me," he went on, after a pause, "if I were to stay here while they stop the coach, our people would kill me, for I should——"

"They would not kill you," she answered quickly; "they would tie your hands together, always with due respect to your rank; and after levying upon the Republicans a contribution sufficient for their equipment and maintenance, and for some purchases of gunpowder, they would again obey you blindly."

"And you would have me command here? If my life is necessary to the cause for which I am fighting, you must allow me to save my honor as a commander. I can pass over this piece of cowardice if it is done in my absence. I will come back again to be your escort."

He walked rapidly away. The young lady heard the sound of his footsteps with evident vexation. When the sound of his tread on the dead rustling leaves had died away, she waited a while like one stupefied, then she hurried back to the Chouans. An abrupt scornful gesture escaped her; she said to Marche-à-Terre, who was aiding her to dismount, "The young man wants to open war on the Republic in regular form!—Ah, well, he will alter his mind in a day or two. But how he has treated me!" she said to herself after a pause.

She sat down on the rock where the Marquis had been sitting, and waited the coming of the coach in silence. It was not one of the least significant signs of the times that a young and noble lady should be thus brought by violent party feeling into the struggle between the monarchies and the spirit of the age, impelled by the strength of those feelings to assist in deeds, to which she yet was (so to speak) not an accessory, led like many another by an exaltation of soul that sometimes brings great things to pass. Many a woman, like her, played a part in those troubled

times; sometimes it was a sorry one, sometimes the part of a heroine. The Royalist cause found no more devoted and active emissaries than among such women as these.

In expiation of the errors of devotion, or for the mischances of the false position in which these heroines of their cause were placed, perhaps none suffered so bitterly as the lady at that moment seated on the slab of granite by the wayside; yet even in her despair she could not but admire the noble pride and the loyalty of the young chief. Insensibly she fell to musing deeply. Bitter memories awoke that made her look longingly back to early and innocent days, and regret that she had not fallen a victim to this Revolution, whose progress such weak hands as hers could never stay.

The coach, which had counted for something in the Chouan attack, had left the village of Ernée some moments before the two parties began skirmishing. Nothing reveals the character of a country more clearly than its means of communication. Looked at in this light, the coach deserves special attention. The Revolution itself was powerless to destroy it; it is going yet in our own day.

When Turgot resumed the monopoly of conveyance of passengers throughout France, which Louis XIV. had granted to a company, he started the fresh enterprise which gave his name to the coaches or *turgotines;* and then out into the provinces went the old chariots of Messrs. de Vousges, Chauteclaire, and the widow Lacombe, to do service upon the highways. One of these miserable vehicles came and went between Mayenne and Fougères. They were called *turgotines* out of pure perversity and by way of antiphrasis; perhaps a dislike for the minister who started the innovation, or a desire to mimic Paris, suggested the appellation.

This *turgotine* was a crazy cabriolet, with two enormous wheels; its back seat, which scarcely afforded room for two fairly stout people, served also as a box for carrying the mails. Some care was required not to overload the feeble

structure; but if travelers carried any luggage, it had to lie in the bottom of the coach, a narrow, box-like hole shaped like a pair of bellows, where their feet and legs were already cramped for room. The original color of the body and the wheels offered an insoluble enigma to the attention of passengers. Two leather curtains, unmanageable in spite of their long service, protected the sufferers from wind and weather. The driver, seated in front on a rickety bench, as in the wretchedest chaises about Paris, was perforce included in the conversation, by reason of his peculiar position among his victims, biped and quadruped. There were fantastic resemblances between the vehicle and some decrepit old man who has come through so many bronchial attacks and apoplectic seizures that Death seems to respect him. It went complainingly, and creaked at every other moment. Like a traveler overtaken by heavy slumber, it lurched backwards and forwards, as if it would fain have resisted the strenuous efforts of the little Breton horses that dragged it over a tolerably uneven road. This relic of a bygone time held three passengers; their conversation had been interrupted at Ernée while the horses were changed, and was now resumed as they left the place.

"What makes you think that the Chouans will show themselves out here?" asked the driver. "They have just told me at Ernée that the commandant Hulot had not yet left Fougères."

"It's all very well for you, friend," said the youngest of the three; "you risk nothing but your own skin. If you were known as a good patriot and carried three hundred crowns about you, as I do, you wouldn't take things so easily."

"In any case, you are very imprudent," said the driver, shaking his head.

"You may count your sheep and yet the wolf will get them," said the second person. He was dressed in black, looked about forty years of age, and seemed to be a *recteur* thereabouts. His double chin and florid complexion

marked him out as belonging to the Church. Short and stout though he was, he displayed a certain agility each time he got in or out of the conveyance.

"Are you Chouans?" cried the owner of the three hundred crowns. His voluminous goatskin cloak covered breeches of good cloth and a very decent waistcoat, all signs of a well-to-do farmer. "By the soul of St. Robespierre," he went on, "you shall be well received. . . ."

He looked from the driver to the rector, and showed them both the pistols at his waist.

"Bretons are not to be frightened that way," said the curé; "and besides that, do we look as if we wanted your money?"

Each time the word money was mentioned the driver became silent. The *recteur's* wits were keen enough to make him suspect that the patriot had no money, and that there was some cash in the keeping of their charioteer.

"Have you much of a load, Coupiau?" he inquired.

"Next to nothing, as you may say, Monsieur Gudin," replied the driver.

Monsieur Gudin looked inquiringly from Coupiau to the patriot at this, but both countenances were alike imperturbable.

"So much the better for you," answered the patriot. "I shall take my own measures for protecting my money if anything goes wrong."

This direct assumption of despotic authority provoked Coupiau into replying roughly:

"I am the master here in the coach, and so long as I take you to——"

"Are you a patriot or a Chouan?" interrupted his adversary sharply.

"I am neither," answered Coupiau; "I am a postilion, and, what is more, a Breton; and therefore I am not afraid of Blues nor of gentlemen."

"Gentlemen of the road, you mean," said the patriot sardonically.

"They only take what others have taken from them," put in the *recteur* quickly, while the eyes of either traveler stared at the other as if to penetrate into either's brain. In the interior of the coach sat a third person who remained absolutely silent through the thick of the debate. Neither the driver, the patriot, nor Gudin himself took the slightest heed of this nonentity. As a matter of fact, he was one of those tiresome and inconvenient people who travel by coach as passively as a calf that is carried with its legs tied up to a neighboring market. At the outset they possess themselves of at least the space allotted to them by the regulations, and end by sleeping without consideration or humanity on their neighbors' shoulders. The patriot, Gudin, and the driver had let him alone, thinking that he was asleep, as soon as they had ascertained that it was useless to attempt to converse with a man whose stony countenance bore the records of a life spent in measuring ells of cloth, and a mind bent solely upon buying cheap and selling dear. Yet, in the corner where he lay curled up, a pair of china-blue eyes opened from time to time; the stout, little man had viewed each speaker in turn with alarm, doubt, and mistrust, but he seemed to stand in fear of his traveling companions, and to trouble himself very little about Chouans. The driver and he looked at one another like a pair of freemasons. Just then the firing began at La Pèlerine; Coupiau stopped in dismay, not knowing what to do.

"Oh, ho!" said the churchman, who seemed to grasp the situation; "this is something serious. There are a lot of people about."

"The question is, who will get the best of it, M. Gudin?" cried Coupiau, and this time the same anxiety was seen on all faces.

"Let us put up at the inn down there, and hide the coach till the affair is decided," suggested the patriot.

The advice seemed so sound that Coupiau acted upon it, and with the patriot's help concealed the coach behind a pile of faggots.

The supposed *recteur* found an opportunity of whispering to Coupiau:

"Has he really any money?"

"Eh, M. Gudin, if all he has found its way into your reverence's pockets they would not be very heavy."

The Republicans, hurrying to reach Ernée, came past the inn without stopping there. The sound of their rapid march brought Gudin and the innkeeper to the door to watch them curiously. All at once the stout ecclesiastic made a dash at a soldier who was lagging behind.

"Eh?" he cried, "Gudin! Are you really going with the Blues? Infatuated boy! Do you know what you are about?"

"Yes, uncle," answered the corporal; "I have sworn to fight for France!"

"But your soul is in danger, scapegrace," cried his uncle, appealing to the religious scruples that are so strong in Breton hearts.

"Well, uncle, I won't say but that if the king had put himself at the head of his——"

"Idiot! Who is talking about the king? Will your Republic give preferment? It has upset everything! What kind of a career do you expect? Stay with us; we shall triumph some day or other, and then you shall be made councillor to some Parliament."

"A Parliament?" asked Gudin mockingly. "Good-bye, uncle!"

"You shall not have the worth of three louis from me; I shall disinherit you," his uncle called angrily after him.

"Thanks," said the Republican, and they parted.

The fumes of cider to which the patriot had treated Coupiau while the little troop was passing had succeeded in obscuring the driver's intelligence somewhat; but he brightened up again when the landlord, having learned the upshot of the struggle, brought the news of a victory for the Blues. Coupiau brought out his coach upon the road again, and they were not long in showing themselves in the bot-

tom of the valley of La Pèlerine. From the plateaux of Maine and of Brittany both it was easy to see the coach lying in the trough between two great waves, like a bit of wreckage after a storm at sea.

Hulot meanwhile had reached the summit of a slope that the Blues were climbing. La Pèlerine was still in sight, a long way off, so he turned to see if the Chouans still remained on the spot. The sunlight shining on the barrels of their muskets marked them out for him as a little group of bright dots. As he scanned the valley for the last time before quitting it for the valley of Ernée, he thought he could discern Coupiau's chariot on the highroad.

"Isn't that the Mayenne coach?" he asked of his two comrades, who turned their attention to the old turgotine and recognized it perfectly well.

"Well, then, how was it that we did not meet it?" asked Hulot, as all three looked at each other in silence.

"Here is one more enigma," he went on; "but I begin to have an inkling of the truth."

Just at that very instant Marche-à-Terre also discovered the turgotine, and pointed it out to his comrades. A general outburst of rejoicing aroused the young lady from her musings. She came forward and saw the coach as it sped up the hillside with luckless haste. The miserable turgotine reached the plateau almost immediately; and the Chouans, who had hidden themselves, once more rushed out upon their prey in greedy haste. The dumb traveler slipped down into the bottom of the coach, and cowered there, trying to look like a package.

"Well," cried Coupiau from the box, "so you have smelled out the patriot there! He has money about him—a bag full of gold;" and as he spoke, he pointed out the small farmer, only to find that the Chouans hailed his remarks with a general roar of laughter and shouts of "Pille-Miche! Pille-Miche! Pille-Miche!" In the midst of the hilarity, which Pille-Miche himself echoed, Coupiau came down from the box in confusion. The famous Cibot, alias Pille-Miche,

aided his companion to alight, and a respectful murmur arose.

"It is the Abbé Gudin!" cried several voices.

All hats went off at the name, and the Chouans knelt to ask for his blessing, which was gravely given.

Then the Abbé clapped Pille-Miche on the shoulder.

"He would deceive St. Peter himself, and steal away the keys of Paradise!" he cried. "But for him the Blues would have stopped us;" and, seeing the young lady, he spoke with her a few paces aside. Marche-à-Terre adroitly raised the seat of the coach, and with ferocious glee, extracted a bag which, from its shape, evidently contained rouleaux of gold. He was not long about dividing the spoil. There were no disputes, for each Chouan received his exact share. Lastly, he went up to the lady and the priest, and presented them with about six thousand francs.

"Can I take this with a clear conscience, Monsieur Gudin?" the lady asked, feeling within her the need of a sanction.

"Why not, madame? In former times, did not the Church approve the confiscation of Protestant goods? And we have stronger reasons for despoiling these revolutionaries, who deny God, plunder churches, and persecute religion!" Thereupon the Abbé added example to precept, and took without scruple the tenth—in new coin—which Marche-à-Terre offered him.

"However," he added, "I can now dedicate all I have to the service of God and the King. My nephew has cast in his lot with the Blues."

Coupiau was lamenting, and bewailed himself for a ruined man.

"Come along with us," said Marche-à-Terre; "you shall have your share."

"Every one will say that I set out to be robbed, if I go back again, and there are no traces of violence."

"Oh, if that is all you want," said Marche-à-Terre. He made a sign, and a volley of musketry riddled the turgotine.

The old coach gave a cry so piteous at this salute, that the Chouans, naturally superstitions, fell back in alarm, save Marche-à-Terre, who had seen the pale face of the mute traveler as it rose and fell inside.

"There is one more fowl yet in your coop," Marche-à-Terre said in a low voice to Coupiau. Pille-Miche, who saw what this meant, winked significantly.

"Yes," replied the driver; "but I made it a condition when I enlisted with you that I was to take this worthy man safe and sound to Fougères. I promised that in the name of the Saint of Auray."

"Who is he?" asked Pille-Miche.

"I can't tell you that," said Coupiau.

"Let him alone!" said Marche-à-Terre, nudging Pille-Miche with his elbow. "He swore by the Holy Virgin of Auray, and a promise is a promise. But don't be in too great a hurry down the hill," the Chouan went on, addressing Coupiau; "we will catch you up for reasons of our own. I want to see the muzzle of that passenger of yours, and then we will give him a passport."

A horse was heard approaching La Pèlerine at full gallop. In a moment the young leader returned, and the lady promptly tried to conceal her hand with the bag in it.

"You need not scruple to keep that money," he said, drawing the lady's arm forward. "Here is a letter for you among those that awaited me at the Vivetière; it is from your mother."

He looked from the coach, which now descended the hill, to the Chouans, and added, "In spite of my haste, I am too late. Heaven send that my fears are ill grounded!"

"That is my poor mother's money!" cried the lady, when she had broken the seal of the letter and read the first few lines.

Sounds of smothered laughter came from the woods.

The young man himself could not help smiling at sight of the lady with a share of the plunder of her own property in her hands. She began to laugh herself.

"Well, I escape without blame for once, Marquis," she said. "Heaven be praised!"

"So you take all things with a light heart, even remorse?" the young man asked; but she flushed up with such evident contrition that he relented. The Abbé politely handed to her the tenth he had just received with as good a face as he could put upon it, and followed the young leader, who was returning by the way he had come. The young lady waited behind for a moment, and beckoned to Marche-à-Terre.

"You must go over towards Mortagne," she said in a low voice. "I know that the Blues must be continually transmitting large sums of money to Alençon for the prosecution of the war. I give up to your comrades the money I have lost to-day; but I shall expect them to make it up to me. And before all things, the Gars is not to know the reason for this expedition; but if anything should go wrong, I will pacify him."

"Madame," the Marquis began, as she sat behind him *en croupe,* having made over her horse to the Abbé, "our friends in Paris are writing to tell us to keep a sharp lookout, for the Republic means to take us with craft and guile."

"Well, they might do worse," she replied; "it is not at all a bad idea of theirs. I shall take part now in the war, and meet the enemy on my own ground."

"Faith, yes," said the Marquis. "Pichegru warns me to be on my guard as to friendships of every kind. The Republic does me the honor to consider me more formidable than all the Vendeans put together, and thinks to get me into its grasp by working on my weaknesses."

"Are you going to suspect *me*?" she said, tapping his breast with the hand by which she held him close to her.

"Would you be there, in my heart, if I could?" he said, and turned to receive a kiss on his forehead.

"Then we are like to run more risks from Fouché's police than from regular troops or from Counter-Chouans," was the Abbé's comment.

"Your reverence is quite right."

"Ah, ha!" the lady exclaimed, "so Fouché is going to send women against you? I am ready for them," she added after a brief pause, with a deeper note in her voice.

Meantime, some four gunshots from the lonely plateau which the leaders had just quitted, a drama was being enacted of a kind to be common enough on the highways for some time. Beyond the little village of La Pèlerine, Pille-Miche and Marche-à-Terre had again stopped the coach in a place where the road widened out. Coupiau, after a feeble resistance, came down from the box. The taciturn traveler, dragged from his hiding-place by the two Chouans, found himself on his knees in a bush of broom.

"Who are you?" asked Marche-à-Terre in threatening tones. The traveler did not answer at all till Pille-Miche recommenced his examination with a blow from the butt end of his musket. Then, with a glance at Coupiau, the man spoke:

"I am Jacques Pinaud, a poor linen-draper." Coupiau seemed to think that he did not break his word by shaking his head. Pille-Miche acted on the hint, and pointed his musket at the traveler, while Marche-à-Terre deliberately uttered this terrible ultimatum:

"You are a great deal too fat to know the pinch of poverty. If we have to ask you for your name again, here is my friend Pille-Miche with his musket, ready to earn the esteem and gratitude of your heirs. Now, who are you?" he asked after a pause.

"I am d'Orgemont of Fougères."

"Ha!" cried the two Chouans.

"*I* did not betray you, Monsieur d'Orgemont," said Coupiau. "The holy Virgin is my witness that I did my best to protect you."

"Since you are Monsieur d'Orgemont of Fougères," replied Marche-à-Terre with a fine affectation of respect, "of course we must let you go in peace. But still, as you are neither good Chouan nor genuine Blue (for you it was who

bought the property of the Abbey of Juvigny), you are going to pay us three hundred crowns"—here he seemed to count the number of the party—and went on, "of six francs each. Neutrality is cheap at the price."

"Three hundred crowns of six francs each!" echoed the unlucky banker in chorus with Coupiau and Pille-Miche, each one with a different intonation.

"My dear sir, I am a ruined man," he cried. "This devil of a Republic taxes us up to the hilt, and this forced loan of a hundred millions has drained me dry."

"How much did your Republic want of you?"

"A thousand crowns, my dear sir," groaned the banker, thinking to be let off more easily.

"If your Republic wrings forced loans out of you to that tune, you ought to throw in your lot with us. Our government will cost you less. Three hundred crowns—isn't your skin worth that?"

"Where am I to find them?"

"In your strong box," said Pille-Miche. "And no clipped coins, mind you, or the fire shall nibble your finger-ends!"

"Where am I to pay them over?"

"Your country-house at Fougères is not very far from the farm at Gibarry, where lives my cousin Galope-Chopine, otherwise big Cibot. You will make them over to him," said Pille-Miche.

"It is not business," urged d'Orgemont.

"What is that to us?" said Marche-à-Terre. "Mind this, if the money isn't paid to Galope-Chopine within a fortnight, we will pay you a call, and that will cure the gout in your feet, if it happens to trouble you. As for you, Coupiau," he turned to the driver, "your name in future will be *Mène-à-Bien.*"

With that the two Chouans departed. The traveler returned to the coach, and, with the help of Coupiau's whip, they bowled rapidly along to Fougères.

"If you had carried arms," Coupiau began, "we might have defended ourselves better."

"Simpleton!" replied the banker; "I have ten thousand francs there," and he held out his great shoes. "How is one to show fight with a large sum like that about one?"

Mène-à-Bien scratched his ear and sent a glance behind him, but his new friends were quite out of sight.

At Ernée Hulot and his men halted a while to leave the wounded in the hospital in the little town, and finally arrived at Mayenne without any further annoyance. The next day put an end to the commandant's doubts as to the fate of the stage-coach, for everybody knew how it had been stopped and plundered.

A few days after, the authorities directed upon Mayenne enough patriot conscripts to fill the gaps in Hulot's demi-brigade. Very soon one disquieting rumor followed another concerning the insurrection. There was complete revolt at all the points which had been the centres of rebellion for Chouans and Vendeans in the late war. In Brittany the Royalists had made themselves masters of Pontorson, thus securing their communication with the sea. The little town of Saint James, between Pontorson and Fougères had been taken by them, and it appeared that they meant to make it their temporary headquarters, their central magazine, and basis of operations. Thence they kept up a correspondence with Normandy and Morbihan in security. The Royalists of the three provinces were brought into concerted action by subaltern officers dispersed throughout the country, who recruited partisans for the Monarchy, and gave unity to their methods. Exactly similar reports came from La Vendée, where conspiracy was rife in the country under the guidance of four well-known leaders—the Counts of Fontaine, Chatillon, and Suzannet, and the Abbé Vernal. In Orne their correspondents were said to be the Chevalier de Valois, the Marquis of Escrignon, and the Troisvilles. The real head and centre of the vast and formidable plan of operations, that gradually became manifest, was the Gars, for so the Chouans had dubbed the Marquis of Montauran since his arrival among them.

Hulot's dispatches to his Government were found to be accurate on all heads. The authority of the newly-arrived commander had been recognized at once. The Marquis had even sufficient ascendency over the Chouans to make them understand the real aim of the war, and to persuade them that the excesses of which they had formerly been guilty, sullied the generous cause which they had embraced. The cool courage, splendid audacity, resource, and ability of the young noble were reviving the hopes of the foes of the Republic, and had excited the sombre enthusiasm of the West to such a pitch that even the most lukewarm were ready to take part in a bold stroke for the fallen Monarchy. Hulot's repeated reports and appeals received no reply from Paris; some fresh revolutionary crisis, no doubt, caused the astonishing silence.

"Are appeals to the Government going to be treated like a creditor's duns?" said the old chief to his friends. "Are all our petitions shoved out of sight?"

But before long news began to spread of the magical return of General Bonaparte, and the events of the eighteenth of Brumaire. Then the commanders in the West began to understand the silence of the ministers, while they grew impatient of the heavy responsibilities that weighed upon them, and eager to hear what steps the new Government meant to take. Great was the joy in the army when it became known that General Bonaparte had been nominated First Consul of the Republic, and for the first time they saw a man of their own at the head of affairs. France had made an idol of the young general, and trembled with hope. The capital, grown weary of gloom, gave itself up to festivities long discontinued. The first acts of the Consulate abated these hopes no whit, and gave Liberty no qualms. The First Consul issued a proclamation to the dwellers in the West. Bonaparte had, one might almost say, invented the appeals to the masses which produced such enormous effect in those days of miracles and patriotism. A prophetic voice it was which filled the world, for victory had never yet failed to follow any proclamation of his.

"Inhabitants!

"For the second time an unnatural war has been kindled in the departments of the West.

"The authors of these troubles are traitors in the pay of England, or marauders who hope to secure their own ends, and to enjoy immunity amid civil discords.

"To such men as these the Government owes neither consideration nor an explanation of its principles.

"But there are other citizens, dear to their country, who have been seduced by their artifices; to these citizens, enlightenment and a knowledge of the truth is due.

"Unjust laws have been promulgated and carried into effect. The security of citizens and their right to liberty of conscience have been infringed by arbitrary measures; citizens have suffered everywhere from mistaken entries on the list of Emigrants, great principles of social order have been violated.

"The Consuls declare that, liberty of worship being guaranteed by the Constitution, the law of the 11th Prairial, Year III., by which citizens are allowed the use of buildings erected for religious worship, shall now be carried into effect.

"The Government will pardon previous offences; it will extend mercy and absolute and complete indemnity to the repentant; but it will strike down any who shall dare, after this declaration, to resist the national sovereignty."

"Well," said Hulot, after a public reading of the Consular manifesto, "could anything be more paternal? But for all that, you will see that not a single Royalist brigand will change his opinion!"

The commandant was right. The proclamation only confirmed each one in his adherence to his own side. Reinforcements for Hulot and his colleagues arrived a few days later. They were notified by the new Minister of War that General Brune was about to assume command in the West; but in the meanwhile Hulot, as an officer known to be experienced, was intrusted with the departments of the Orne and Mayenne. Every Government department

showed unheard-of energy. A circular from the Minister of War and the Minister-General of Police gave out that active efforts were to be made through the officers in command to stifle the insurrection *at its place of origin.* But by this time the Chouans and Vendeans, profiting by the inaction of the Republic, had aroused the whole country and made themselves masters of it. So a new Consular proclamation had to be issued.

This time the General spoke to his troops:

"Soldiers, all who now remain in the West are marauders or emigrants in the pay of England.

"The army numbers more than sixty thousand heroes; let me learn soon that the rebel leaders exist no longer. Glory is only to be had at the price of fatigue; who would not acquire it if it were to be gained by stopping in town quarters?

"Soldiers, no matter what your rank in the army, the gratitude of the nation awaits you. To be worthy of that gratitude you must brave the inclemency of the seasons, frost and snow, and the bitter cold of winter nights; you must surprise your enemies at daybreak and destroy those wretches who disgrace the name of Frenchmen.

"Let the campaign be short and sharp; show no mercy to the marauders, and preserve strict discipline among yourselves.

"National Guards, add your efforts to those of the troops of the line.

"If you know of any partisans of the bandits among yourselves, arrest them! Let them nowhere find a refuge from the soldier who pursues them; and should traitors dare to receive and protect them, let both alike perish!"

"What a fellow!" cried Hulot; "it is just as it used to be in Italy; first he rings the bells for mass, and then he goes and says it. Isn't that plain speaking?"

"Yes, but he speaks for himself and in his own name," said Gérard, who began to feel some concern for the results of the eighteenth of Brumaire.

"Eh! *Sainte gûerite,* what does it matter! Isn't he a soldier?" cried Merle.

A few paces away some soldiers had made a group about the placard on the wall. As no one among them could read, they eyed it, some with curiosity, others with indifference, while one or two looked out for some passing citizen who should appear scholar enough to decipher it.

"What does that scrap of paper mean, now, Clef-des-Cœurs?" asked Beau-Pied banteringly.

"It is quite easy to guess," said Clef-des-Cœurs. Everybody looked up at these words for the usual comedy to begin between two comrades.

"Now look here," went on Clef-des-Cœurs, pointing to a rough vignette at the head of the proclamation, where a pair of compasses had in the past few days replaced the plumb-line level of 1793. "That means that we soldiers will have to step out. That's why the compasses are open; it's an emblem."

"No, my boy, you can't come the scholar over us. That thing is called a problem. I served once in the artillery," he added, "and that was what my officers fairly lived on."

"It's an emblem."

"A problem."

"Let us lay a bet on it."

"What?"

"Will you stake your German pipe?"

"Done!"

"No offence to you, sir!" said Clef-des-Cœurs to Gérard; "but isn't that an emblem and not a problem?"

"It is both the one and the other," said Gérard gravely. He was musing as he prepared to follow Hulot and Merle.

"The adjutant is laughing at us," said Beau-Pied; "that paper says that our general in Italy has been made Consul, which is a fine promotion, and we are all to have new caps and shoes."

II

A NOTION OF FOUCHÉ'S

One morning towards the end of the month of Brumaire, after an order from the Government had concentrated Hulot's troops upon Mayenne, that officer was engaged in drilling his demi-brigade. An express from Alençon arrived with dispatches, which he read, while intense annoyance expressed itself in his face.

"Come, forward!" he cried peevishly, stuffing the papers into his hat. "Two companies are to set out with me to march upon Mortagne. The Chouans are there. You shall accompany me," he said, turning to Merle and Gérard. "May I be ennobled if I understand a word of this. I may be a fool, but no matter, forward! There is no time to lose."

"What sort of fearful fowl could come out of that game bag?" asked Merle, kicking the fallen envelope.

"*Tonnerre de Dieu!* They are making fools of us, that is all."

Whenever this expression, explained above, escaped the commandant, it always meant a storm of some sort. The modulations of his voice when he uttered this phrase indicated to the demi-brigade, like the degrees of a thermometer, the amount of patience left in their chief; and the outspoken old soldier made this knowledge so easy, that the most mischievous drummer could take his measure, by remarking his shades of manner in puckering up his cheek and winking. This time the suppressed anger with which he brought out the word silenced his friends and made them circumspect. The pock-marks on his martial countenance seemed deeper and darker than usual. As he put on his three-cornered hat, his large plaited queue had slipped

round upon one shoulder. Hulot pushed it back so violently that the little curls were unsettled. However, as he remained motionless, with his arm locked across his chest and his moustache a-bristle with rage, Gérard ventured to ask:

"Must we set out at once?"

"Yes, if the cartridge-boxes are filled," he growled out.

"They are all full."

"Shoulder arms! left file! forward, march!" ordered Gérard, at a sign from Hulot.

The drums headed the two companies chosen by Gérard. The commandant, plunged in his own thoughts, seemed to rouse himself at the sound, and went out of the town between his two friends without a word to either. Now and again Merle and Gérard looked at each other as if to say, "How long is he going to be sulky with us?" and as they went they furtively glanced at Hulot, who muttered chance words between his teeth.

Something very like an oath at times reached the soldiers' ears, but neither dared to say a word, for on occasion all could preserve the severe discipline to which Bonaparte had accustomed his troops in Italy. Hulot and most of his men represented all that was left of the famous battalions who surrendered at Mayence, on condition that they should not be employed upon the frontiers; and the army had nicknamed them the *Mayençais.* It would have been difficult to find officers and men who understood each other better.

The earliest hours of the next morning found Hulot and his friends a league beyond Alençon on the Mortagne side, on a road through the meadows beside the Sarthe. On the left lie stretches of picturesque lowland; while on the right the dark woods, part of the great forest of Menil-Broust, form a *set-off,* to borrow a word from the studio, to the lovely views of the river. The clearings of the ditches on either hand, which are constantly thrown up in a mound on their further sides, form high banks, on the top of which furze bushes grow, *ajoncs,* as they call them in the West.

These dense bushes furnished excellent winter fodder for horses and cattle, but so long as they remained uncut the dark-green clumps served as hiding places for Chouans. These banks and furze bushes, signs which tell the traveler that he is nearing Brittany, made this part of the journey in those days as dangerous as it was beautiful.

The dangers involved by a journey from Mortagne to Alençon, and from Alençon to Mayenne, had caused Hulot's departure, and now the secret of his anger finally escaped him. He was escorting an old mail-coach drawn by post-horses, which the weariness of the soldiers compelled to move at a foot pace. The companies of Blues, belonging to the garrison of Mortagne, were visible as black dots in the distance on their way back thither; they had accompanied this shocking conveyance within their prescribed limits, and here Hulot must succeed them in the service, a "patriotic bore," as the soldiers not unjustly called it. One of the old Republican's companies took up its position a little in front, and the other a little behind the calèche; and Hulot, who found himself between Merle and Gérard, at an equal distance from the vehicle and the vanguard, suddenly said:

"*Mille Tonnerres!* would you believe that the general has drafted us out of Mayenne to escort a couple of petticoats in this old *fourgon?*"

"But not so long since, commandant," said Gérard "when we took up our position, you made your bow to the citoyennes with a good enough grace."

"Ah! that is the worst of it! Don't these dandies in Paris require us to pay the greatest attention to their damned females? How can they bring dishonor on good and brave patriots like us, by setting us to dangle after a petticoat! I run straight myself, and I don't like crooked ways in others. When I saw that Danton and Barras had mistresses, I used to say, 'Citizens, when the Republic called on you to govern, it was not that you might play the same games as the old *régime.*' You will say now that women?—Oh, one must have women, that is right enough. Brave men must

have women, look you, and good women too. But when things grow serious, prattling ought to stop. Why did we sweep the old abuses away if patriots are to begin them again? Look at the First Consul now, that is a man for you; no women, always at work. I would wager my left moustache he knows nothing of this foolish business."

"Really, commandant," laughed Merle, "I have seen the tip of the nose of the young lady there hidden on the back seat, and I am sure that no one need be blamed for feeling, as I do, a sort of hankering to take a turn round the coach and have a scrap of conversation with the ladies."

"Look out, Merle!" said Gérard; "there's a citizen along with the pretty birds quite sharp enough to catch you."

"Who? The *incroyable,* whose little eyes keep dodging about from one side of the road to the other, as if he saw Chouans everywhere? That dandy, whose legs you can scarcely see, and whose head, as soon as his horses' legs are hidden behind the carriage, sticks up like a duck's from a pie? If that nincompoop hinders me from stroking the pretty white throat——"

"Duck and white throat! My poor Merle, thy fancy has taken wings with a vengeance! Don't be too sure of the duck. His green eyes are as treacherous as a viper's, and as shrewd as a woman's when she pardons her husband. I would sooner trust a Chouan than one of these lawyers with a face like a decanter of lemonade."

"Bah!" cried Merle gaily. "With the commandant's leave I shall risk it. That girl has eyes that shine like stars; one might run all hazards for a sight of them."

"He is smitten!" said Gérard to the commandant; "he is raving already."

Hulot made his grimace, shrugged his shoulder, and said:

"I advise him to smell his soup before he takes it."

"Honest Merle, what spirits he has!" said Gérard, judging by the slackening of the other's pace that he meant to allow the coach to overtake him. "He is the only man that can laugh when a comrade dies without being thought heartless."

"He is a French soldier every inch of him," said Hulot gravely.

"Only look at him, pulling his epaulettes over his shoulders, to show that he is a captain," cried Gérard, laughing; "as if his rank would do anything for him there."

There were, in fact, two women in the vehicle towards which the officer turned; one seemed to be the mistress, the other her maid.

"That sort of woman always goes about in pairs," said Hulot.

A thin, dried-up little man hovered sometimes before, sometimes behind the carriage; but though he seemed to accompany the two privileged travelers, no one had yet seen either of them speak a word to him. This silence, whether respectful or contemptuous, the numerous trunks and boxes belonging to the *princess,* as he called her, everything, down to the costume of her attendant cavalier, helped to stir Hulot's bile.

The stranger's dress was an exact picture of the fashions of the time—of the *Incroyable* at an almost burlesque pitch. Imagine a man muffled up in a coat with front so short that five or six inches of waistcoat were left on view, and coat-tails so long behind that they resembled the tail of the cod-fish, after which they were named. A vast cravat wound round his throat in such numerous folds, that his little head issuing from the labyrinth of muslin almost justified Captain Merle's gastronomical simile. The stranger wore tight-fitting breeches and boots *à la Suwarrow.* A huge blue and white cameo served as a shirt-pin, a gold watch chain hung in two parallel lines from his waist. His hair hung on either side of his face in corkscrew ringlets, which almost covered his forehead; while, by way of final adornment, his shirt collar, like the collar of his coat, rose to such a height, that his head seemed surrounded by it, like a bouquet in its cornet of paper.

Over and above the contrast of these insignificant details, all at odds among themselves and out of harmony, imagine

a ludicrous strife of colors, yellow breeches, red waistcoat, and cinnamon-brown coat, and you will form a correct notion of the last decrees of elegance, as obeyed by dandies in the early days of the Consulate. This extravagantly absurd toilette might have been devised as an ordeal for comeliness, or to demonstrate that there is nothing so ridiculous but that fashion can hallow it. The cavalier seemed to be about thirty years of age, though in reality he was barely two-and-twenty. Hard living, or the perils of the times, had perhaps brought this about. In spite of his fantastic costume, there was a certain grace of manner revealed in his movements, which singled him out as a well-bred man.

As the captain reached the coach, the young exquisite seemed to guess his intentions, and assisted them by checking his own horse. Merle's satirical eyes fell upon an impenetrable face, trained, like many another, by the vicissitudes of the Revolution, to hide all feeling, even of the slightest. The moment that the curved edge of a shabby cocked hat and a captain's epaulettes came within the ladies' ken, a voice of angelic sweetness asked him:

"Would you kindly tell us where we are now, *Monsieur l'Officier*?"

There is an indescribable charm in such a question by the way, a whole adventure seems to lurk behind a single word; and furthermore, if the lady, by reason of weakness or lack of experience, asks for some protecting aid, does not every man feel an inward prompting to weave fancies of an impossible happiness for himself? So the polite formality of her question, and her *"Monsieur l'Officier,"* vaguely perturbed the captain's heart. He tried to distinguish the lady's face, and was singularly disappointed; a jealous veil hid her features, he could scarcely see her eyes gleaming behind the gauze, like two agates lit up by the sun.

"You are now within a league of Alençon, madame."

"Alençon, already!" and the stranger lady fell back in the carriage without making any further reply.

"Alençon?" repeated the other woman, who seemed to rouse herself. "You are going to revisit——"

She looked at the captain and checked herself. Merle, disappointed in his hope of a sight of the fair stranger, took a look at her companion. She was a young woman of some twenty-six years of age, fair-haired, well-shaped, with the freshness of complexion and unfading brightness of color which distinguishes the women of Valognes, Bayeux, and the Alençon district. Sprightliness there was not in the expression of her blue eyes, but a certain steadfastness and tenderness. She wore a dress of some common material. Her way of wearing her hair, modestly gathered up and fastened under a little cap such as peasant women wear in the Pays-de-Caux, made her face charming in its simplicity. There was none of the conventional grace of the salons in her manner, but she was not without the dignity natural to a young girl who could contemplate the scenes of her past life without finding any matter for repentance in them.

At a glance, Merle recognized in her one of those country blossoms which have lost none of their pure coloring and rustic freshness, although they have been transplanted into the hothouses of Paris, where the withering glare of many rays of light has been brought to bear upon them. Her quiet looks and unaffected manner made it plain to Merle that she did not wish for an audience. Indeed, when he fell away, the two women began a conversation in tones so low that the murmur scarcely reached his ears.

"You set out in such haste," said the young countrywoman, "that you had barely time to dress. A pretty sight you are! If we are going any farther than Alençon, you will really have to change your dress there. . . . ."

"Oh, oh, Francine!" said the other.

"What do you say?"

"This is the third time that you have tried to learn where we are going, and why."

"Have I said anything whatever to deserve this reproof?"

"Oh, I have noticed your little ways. Simple and straightforward as you used to be, you have learned a little strategy of my teaching. You begin to hold direct questions in ab-

horrence. Quite right, my child. Of all known methods of getting at a secret, that one is, in my opinion, the most futile."

"Very well," said Francine, "as one cannot hide anything from you, admit at least, Marie, that your doings would make a saint inquisitive. Yesterday morning you had nothing whatever, to-day you have gold in plenty. At Mortagne they assign the mail coach to you which has just been robbed and lost its driver; you are given an escort by the Government; and a man whom I regard as your evil genius is following you."

"Who, Corentin?" . . . asked her companion, throwing emphasis into the two words by separate intonations of her voice. There was a contempt in it that overflowed even into the gesture by which she indicated the horseman. "Listen, Francine," she went on, "do you remember Patriot, the monkey that I taught to mimic Danton, and which amused us so much?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Were you afraid of him?"

"But he was chained up."

"And Corentin is muzzled, my child."

"We used to play with Patriot for hours together, I know," said Francine, "but he always played us some ugly trick at last."

And Francine flung herself suddenly back in the carriage, and taking her mistress' hands, stroked them caressingly, as she went on tenderly:

"But you know what is in my thoughts, Marie, and yet you say nothing to me. After the sorrows which have given me so much pain (ah, how much pain!), how should twenty-four hours put you in such spirits, wild as the moods when you used to talk of taking your life? What has brought the change about? You owe me some account of yourself. You belong to me rather than to any other whatever, for you will never be better loved than by me. Tell me, mademoiselle!"

"Very well, Francine; do you not see all about us the cause of my high spirits? Look at those clumps of trees over there, yellow and sere, no one like another. Seen from a distance, might they not be a bit of old tapestry in some château? See these hedges behind which Chouans might be met with at any moment; as I look at those tufts of gorse I seem to see the barrels of muskets. I enjoy this succession of perils about us. Every time that there is a deeper shadow across the road, I think to hear the report of firearms, and my heart beats with an excitement I have never felt before. It is neither fear nor pleasure that moves me so; it is a better thing; it is the free play of all that stirs within me; it is life. How should I not be glad to have revived my own existence a little?"

"Ah! you are telling me nothing, hard heart! Holy Virgin, to whom will she confess if not to me?" said Francine, sadly raising her eyes to heaven.

"Francine," her companion answered gravely, "I cannot tell you about my enterprise. It is too horrible this time."

"But why do evil with your eyes open?"

"What would you have? I detect myself thinking like a woman of fifty and acting like a girl of fifteen. You have always been my better self, my poor girl, but this time I must stifle my conscience . . ." she paused as a sigh escaped her, . . . "and I shall not succeed. But how can I keep such a strict confessor beside me?" and she softly tapped the other's hand.

"Ah! when have I reproached you with anything?" cried Francine. "Evil in you has so much grace with it. Yes, Saint Anne of Auray, to whom I pray so often for you, will absolve you. And for the rest, am I not come beside you now, though I do not know where your way is taking you?"

She kissed her mistress' hands with this outburst.

"But you can leave me," said Marie, "if your conscience——"

"Not another word, madame," said Francine with a little sorrowful twitch of the lips. "Oh, will you not tell me——"

"Nothing!" said the young lady firmly. "Only, be sure of this, that the enterprise is even more odious to me than the smooth-tongued creature who explained its nature. I wish to be candid; so to you I confess that I would not have lent myself to their wishes if I had not seen, in this ignoble farce, some gleams of mingled love and terror which attracted me. Then I would not leave this vile world without an effort to gather the flowers I look for from it, even if I must die for them! But, remember, for it is due to my memory, that had my life been happy, that great knife of theirs held above my head would never have forced me to take a part in this tragedy, for tragedy it is." A gesture of disgust escaped her; then she went on, "But now, if the piece were to be withdrawn, I should throw myself into the Sarthe, and that would be in no sense a suicide, for as yet I have not lived."

"Oh, holy Virgin of Auray, forgive her!"

"What are you afraid of? The dreary ups and downs of domestic life arouse no emotions in me, as you know. This is ill in a woman, but my soul has loftier capacities, in order to abide mightier trials. I should have been, perhaps, a gentle creature like you. Why am I so much above or below other women? Ah, how happy is the wife of General Bonaparte! But I shall die young, for even now I have come not to shrink from that kind of pleasure which means 'drinking blood,' as poor Danton used to say. Now forget all this that the woman of fifty within me says. The girl of fifteen will soon reappear, thank Heaven!"

The younger woman shuddered. She alone understood the fiery and impetuous nature of her mistress; she only had been initiated into the mysteries of an inner life full of lofty imaginings, the ideas of a soul for whom life had hitherto seemed intangible as a shadow which she longed to grasp. There had been no harvest after all her sowings; her nature had never been touched; she was harassed by futile longings, wearied by a struggle without an opponent, so that in despair she had come to prefer good to evil if it came as an enjoy-

ment, and evil to good if only an element of poetry lurked behind, to prefer wretchedness as something grander than a life of narrow comfort, and death, with its dark uncertainties, to an existence of starved hopes or insignificant sufferings. Never has so much powder awaited the spark, such wealth lain in store for love to consume, so much gold been mingled with the clay in a daughter of Eve. Over this nature Francine watched like an angel on earth, worshiping its perfection, feeling that she should fulfil her mission if she preserved, for the choir above, this seraph, kept afar as an expiation of the sin of pride.

"That is the steeple of Alençon," said their cavalier, as he drew near to the coach.

"So I see," said the lady drily.

"Very well!" he said, and fell back again with all the tokens of abject submission, in spite of his disappointment.

"Quicker!" cried the lady to the postilion. "There is nothing to fear now! Go on at a trot or a gallop if you can. We are on the causeway of Alençon, are we not?"

As she passed him she called graciously to Hulot:

"We shall meet each other at the inn, commandant. Come and see me."

"Just so," he replied; "'I am going to the inn, come and see me!' That is the way to speak to the commandant of a demi-brigade."

He jerked his fist in the direction of the vanishing coach.

"Don't grumble, commandant," said Corentin, laughing; "she has your general's commission in her sleeve," and he tried to put his horse to a gallop, to overtake the coach.

"Those good folk shall not make a fool of me," growled Hulot to his two friends. "I would sooner fling my general's uniform into a ditch than get it through a woman's favor. What do the geese mean? Do you understand their drift, either of you?"

"Quite well," said Merle; "I know that she is the handsomest woman I ever set eyes on! You don't understand

figures of speech, I think. Perhaps it is the First Consul's wife."

"Stuff, his wife is not young, and this one is," answered Hulot. "Besides, the orders I have received from the minister inform me that she is Mlle. de Verneuil. She is a *ci-devant*. Don't I know that! They used to carry on like this before the Revolution; you could be a chief of demi-brigade in a brace of shakes. You had only to say to them *'Mon cœur!'* once or twice, with the proper emphasis."

As each soldier "stepped out," to use their commandant's phrase, the wretched vehicle which then served for a mail coach had quickly reached the sign of the Three Moors in the middle of the principal street of Alençon. The rattle of the crazy conveyance brought the landlord to the threshold. Nobody in Alençon had expected that chance would bring the coach to the sign of the Three Moors; but the horrible event at Mortagne brought out so many people to look at it, that its occupants, to escape the general curiosity, fled into the kitchen, the ante-chamber of every inn throughout the West. The host was preparing to follow them after a look at the coach, when the postilion caught his arm.

"Look here, citizen Brutus," he said; "there is an escort of Blues on the way. As there was neither driver nor dispatches, it was my doing that the citoyennes came to you. Of course, they will pay like *ci-devant* princesses; and so——"

"And so we will have a glass of wine together directly, my boy," said the landlord.

Mlle. de Verneuil gave one glance round the smoke-blackened kitchen, and at the stains of raw meat on the table, and then fled like a bird into the next room. For the appearance and odor of the place dismayed her quite as much as the inquisitive looks which a slovenly cook and a short, stout woman fastened upon her.

"How are we going to manage, wife?" said the landlord. "Who the devil would think so many people would come here as times go now? She will never have the patience to

wait till I can serve her up a suitable meal. My word, I have hit upon it; they belong to the quality, why shouldn't they breakfast with the lady upstairs, eh?"

When the host looked about for the newcomers, he found only Francine, whom he drew to the side of the kitchen nearest the yard, so that no one could overhear him, and said:

"If the ladies wish to breakfast by themselves, as I expect they do, I have a very nice meal now ready for a lady and her son. They would not object, of course, to breakfasting with you," he went on mysteriously. "They are people of quality."

The words were hardly out before the landlord felt a light blow on the back from a whip-handle; he turned quickly and saw behind him a short, thick-set man, who had come in noiselessly from a closet adjoining. The stout woman, the cook, and his assistant seemed frozen with terror by this apparition. The landlord turned his head away aghast. The short man shook aside the hair which covered his eyes and forehead and stood on tiptoe to whisper in the landlord's ear:

"You know what any blabbing or imprudence lays you open to, and the color of the money we pay in. We never grudge it——" A gesture rendered his meaning horribly clear.

The stout person of the landlord hid the speaker, but Francine caught a word here and there of his muttered talk, and stood as if thunderstruck as she listened to the hoarse sounds of a Breton voice. Amid the general dismay she sprang towards the speaker, but he had darted through a side door into the yard with the quickness of a wild animal. Francine thought that she must be mistaken, for she could only see what appeared to be the brindled fell of a fair-sized bear.

She ran to the window in surprise, and gazed after the figure through the grimy panes. He was slouching off to the stable; but before he entered, he bent two piercing black

eyes upon the first story of the inn, and then turned them on the coach, as if he wished to call the attention of some one within to some point of special interest about it.

Thanks to this manœuvre, which displayed his face, Francine recognized the Chouan as Marche-à-Terre, despite his goatskin cloak, by his heavy whip, and the lagging gait, which he could quicken upon occasion. She watched him still even through the dimness of the stable, where he lay down in a heap among the straw, in a spot whence he could see all that went on in the inn. Even at close quarters an experienced spy might have taken him for a big carter's dog curled round, asleep, with his muzzle between his paws. His conduct convinced Francine that he had not recognized her. In her mistress' difficult position, she hardly knew whether this was a relief or an annoyance. But her curiosity was whetted by the mysterious connection between the Chouan's threat and the landlord's proposal, for an innkeeper is always ready to stop two months with one morsel.

She left the dingy window, whence she had seen Marche-à-Terre as a shapeless heap in the darkness, and turned to the landlord, who stood like a man who has made a false step and cannot see how to retrieve it. The Chouan's gesture had petrified the poor fellow. Every one in the West knew how the *Chasseurs du Roi* visited even a suspicion of indiscretion with cruel refinements of torture. The landlord seemed to feel their knives at his throat. The chef stared in terror at the hearth, where too often they "warmed the feet" of their victims. The stout woman ceased to pare a potato, and gaped stupidly at her husband, while the scullion tried to guess the meaning of this mute terror. Francine's curiosity was naturally roused by all this dumb-show, with the principal performer absent though still visible. The Chouan's terrible power pleased her; and although it hardly lay in her meek nature to play the abigail, for once she was too deeply interested not to use her opportunities for penetrating this mystery.

"Very good, mademoiselle accepts your offer," she said gravely. At her words the landlord started as if from sleep.

"What offer?" he asked in real surprise.

"What offer?" asked Corentin as he came in.

"What offer?" asked Mlle. de Verneuil.

"What offer?" asked a fourth person from the foot of the staircase, as he sprang into the kitchen.

"Why, to breakfast with your people of distinction," answered Francine impatiently.

"People of distinction," said the arrival from the staircase, in caustic and mocking tones; "this is one of your landlord's jokes, and a very poor one; but if it is this young citoyenne whom you wish to add to our party," he added, looking at Mlle. de Verneuil, "it would be folly to decline, my good fellow. In my mother's absence I accept," and he clapped the bewildered landlord on the shoulder.

The careless grace of youth concealed the insolent pride of his words, which naturally drew the attention of those present to the new actor in the scene. The host put on the face of Pilate at this, washing his hands of the death of Christ; he stepped back and whispered to his plump wife:

"You are my witness, that if anything goes wrong, I am not to blame. But, at all events," he added in still lower tones, "let M. Marche-à-Terre know everything."

The newcomer was of middle height, and wore the uniform of the "École polytechnique," a blue coat without epaulettes, breeches of the same material, and black gaiters that reached above the knee. In spite of this sombre costume, Mademoiselle de Verneuil recognized at a glance the grace of his figure and an indescribable something which indicated noble birth. At first sight there was nothing remarkable in his face, but something in his features soon made it felt that he was capable of great things. A sun-burned face, fair and curling hair, brilliant blue eyes, and a delicately cut nose, all these traits, like the ease of his movements, revealed a life subordinated to lofty sentiments and a mind accustomed to command. The feature that most clearly revealed his character was a chin like Bonaparte's, or a mouth where the lower lip met the upper in a curve like that of some

acanthus leaf on a Corinthian capital; there Nature had exerted all her powers of magic.

"This young man is no ordinary Republican," said Mlle. de Verneuil to herself.

She understood everything in a moment, and the wish to please awoke in her. She bent her head a little to one side with a coquettish smile, and the dark eyes shot forth one of those velvet glances that would awaken life in a heart dead to love; then the heavy eyelids fell over her black eyes, and their thick lashes made a curved line of shadow on her cheeks as she said, "We are very much obliged to you, sir," imparting a thrill to the conventional phrase by the most musical tones her voice could give. All this by-play took place in less time than it takes to describe it, and at once Mlle. de Verneuil turned to the landlord, asked for her room, found the staircase, and disappeared with Francine, leaving the stranger to decide whether or no she had accepted his invitation.

"Who is the woman?" asked the pupil of the École polytechnique of the still further embarrassed and motionless landlord.

"She is the citoyenne Verneuil," answered Corentin tartly, as he ran his eyes over the other jealously. "What makes you ask?"

The stranger hummed a Republican air, and raised his head haughtily at Corentin. The two young men looked at one another for a moment like game-cocks about to fight, and at a glance an undying hatred of each other dawned in them both. For the frank gaze of the soldier's blue eyes there shone malice and deceit in Corentin's green orbs. The one naturally possessed a gracious manner, the other could only substitute insinuating dexterity of address; the first would have rushed forward where the other slunk back. The one commanded the respect that the other sought to obtain; the first seemed to say, "Let us conquer!" the second, "Let us divide the spoil!"

"Is the citizen du Gua St.-Cyr here?" asked a peasant at the door.

"What do you want with him?" asked the young man, coming forward.

The peasant made a deep reverence and handed him a letter, which the young man read and threw into the fire. He nodded by way of answer, and the peasant went away.

"You have come from Paris, no doubt, citizen!" said Corentin, coming up to him with a familiar and cringing complaisance that the citizen du Gua could hardly endure.

"Yes," he replied drily.

"Some appointment in the artillery, I expect."

"No, citizen, in the navy."

"Ah! then you are going to Brest," said Corentin carelessly, but the young sailor turned away quickly on his heel without replying.

He soon disappointed the fair expectations that Mlle. de Verneuil had formed of him. A puerile interest in his breakfast absorbed him. He discussed recipes with the chef and the landlady, opened his eyes at provincial ways like a fledgling Parisian picked out of his enchanted shell, affected repugnances, and altogether showed a weakness of mind that one would not have expected from his appearance. Corentin smiled pityingly as he turned up his nose at the best cider in Normandy.

"Faugh!" he cried, "how do you manage to swallow that stuff? One could eat and drink it too. No wonder the Republic suspects a district where they bang the trees with long poles for their vintage, and lie in wait to shoot travelers on the roads. Don't put that physic on the table for us, but give us some good Bordeaux wine, both white and red, and see, above all things, that there is a good fire upstairs. Civilization is a long way behind hereabouts, it seems to me. Ah!" he sighed, "there is but one Paris in the world, and it is a pity indeed that one cannot take it afloat with one. Hullo, spoil-sauce," he cried to the cook, "do you mean to say you are putting vinegar into the fricassee when there are lemons at hand? And your sheets, madam landlady, were so coarse, that I scarcely slept a wink all night."

He then betook himself to playing with a large cane, performing with childish gravity a number of evolutions, which decided the place of a youth among Incroyables by the degree of skill and neatness with which they were executed.

"And out of whipper-snappers like that the Republic hopes to construct a navy," said Corentin confidentially, as he scanned the landlord's face.

"That man is one of Fouché's spies," whispered the sailor to the landlady. "I see it in every line of his face. I would swear that he brought that splash of mud on his chin from Paris. But set a thief to catch——"

A lady entered the kitchen as he spoke, whom he greeted with every outward sign of respect.

"Come here, *chère maman*," he cried; "I think I have found some one to share our meal."

"To share our meal! What nonsense!" she replied.

"It is Mlle. de Verneuil," he said, lowering his voice.

"She perished on the scaffold after the Savenay affair; she had come to Mans to save her brother, the Prince de Loudon," said his mother shortly.

"You are mistaken, madame," said Corentin amiably, and with a little pause on the word *madame*. "There is a second Mademoiselle de Verneuil. Great families have always several branches."

Surprised at his freedom, the lady drew back a pace or two, as if to scrutinize this unlooked-for speaker. She bent her dark eyes upon him as if she would divine, with a woman's keen power of apprehension, why he affirmed Mlle. de Verneuil to be yet in existence. Corentin, who at the same time furtively studied the lady, refused her the pleasures of maternity to endow her with those of love.

He gallantly declined to believe her to be the happy mother of a son twenty years of age, seeing her dazzling complexion, her thick arching eyebrows, her still abundant eyelashes, which excited his admiration, and her wealth of black tresses, divided on the forehead into two bandeaux, a style which enhanced the youthfulness of a sprightly face.

It was the force of passion, he thought, and by no means time, that had set faint lines on her forehead; and if the piercing eyes drooped somewhat, this might be due rather to the constant expression of lively feelings than to the weariness of her pilgrimage. Corentin then discovered that the cloak she wore was of English materials, and that her bonnet followed some foreign fashion, and was not in the mode, called *à la Grecque,* which ruled Parisian toilettes.

Corentin's nature always led him to suspect evil rather than good, and he began at once to have his doubts as to the patriotism of the pair; while the lady, who had as rapidly come to her own conclusions about Corentin, looked at her son, as if to say, "Who is this quiz? Is he on our side?" To this implied question, the young man's manner replied, like his look and gesture, "I know nothing about him, upon my word, and you cannot suspect him as much as I do." Then, leaving it to his mother to discover the mystery, he went up and whispered to the hostess:

"Try to find out who the rogue is, and whether he really does accompany that young lady, and why."

"So you are sure, citizen," said Mme. du Gua, looking at Corentin, "that Mlle. de Verneuil is still living?"

"She exists as surely in flesh and blood, madame, as the citizen du Gua Saint-Cyr."

There was a profound irony beneath his words known only to the lady herself; any other woman would have been disconcerted. Her son suddenly fixed his eyes on Corentin, who coolly drew out his watch, and did not seem to suspect the apprehensions his reply had aroused. But the lady, uneasy and anxious to know at once whether treachery lurked in the words, or chance had directed them, said to Corentin quite simply:

"*Mon Dieu!* How unsafe the roads are! The Chouans set upon us on the other side of Mortagne. My son narrowly escaped being left there for good; he had two balls through his hat while defending me."

"Then, madame, you were in the coach that was plundered

by the brigands, in spite of its escort, and which has just brought us hither. You will recognize it, I expect. They said as I came through Mortagne that Chouans to the number of two thousand had attacked the mail, and that every one, even the travelers, had perished. That is how history is written."

The fatuous air with which Corentin spoke, and his drawling tones, recalled some *habitué* of "La Petite Provence," who has discovered to his sorrow that a piece of political news is false.

"Alas, madame," he went on, "if travelers are murdered at such a short distance from Paris, what will be the state of affairs in Brittany! Faith, I shall go back to Paris and not venture any further."

"Is Mademoiselle de Verneuil young and beautiful?" asked the lady of their hostess, as a sudden thought crossed her mind.

Just then the landlord ended the conversation, which had so painful an interest for the three speakers, by the announcement that breakfast was ready. The young sailor offered his arm to his mother with an assumed familiarity which confirmed Corentin's doubts.

He called out as he reached the staircase:

"Citizen, if you are traveling with the citoyenne Verneuil, and she accepts our landlord's offer, do not hesitate." And though these words were careless, and his manner by no means pressing, Corentin went upstairs. As soon as they were some seven or eight steps ahead of the Parisian, the young man pressed the lady's hand affectionately, and said in a low voice:

"See now the inglorious hazards to which your plans have exposed us. If we are detected, how are we to escape? And what a part you have made me play!"

The three entered a large-sized room. Even those unaccustomed to travel in the West would have seen that the landlord had expended all his resources in a lavish preparation for his guests. The table was carefully appointed, the damp-

ness of the room had been driven off by a large fire, the earthenware, linen, and furniture were not intolerably dirty. Corentin saw that the landlord had put himself about a good deal, as the popular saying is, to please the strangers.

"So," he thought, "these people are not what they wish to appear then. The little youngster is adroit. I took him for a simpleton, but I fancy he is quite as sharp as I am myself."

The landlord went to inform Mlle. de Verneuil that the young sailor, his mother, and Corentin awaited her coming.

As she did not appear, the student of the École polytechnique felt sure that she had raised difficulties, and humming *"Veillons au salut de l'Empire,"* he went off in the direction of her room. A curiously keen desire possessed him to overcome her scruples and bring her back with him. Perhaps he meant to solve the doubts which disturbed him, or to try to exert over this stranger the authority men like to exercise in the case of a pretty woman.

"May I be hanged if that is a Republican," thought Corentin, as he went out. "The movements of those shoulders show the courtier. . . . And if that is his mother," he continued, as he looked again at Mme. du Gua, "I am the Pope! I believe they are Chouans; let us make certain of their condition."

The door soon opened, and the young sailor appeared, leading by the hand Mlle. de Verneuil, whom he led to her place with presumptuous civility. The devil had lost nothing during the hour which had just passed. With Francine's aid, Mlle. de Verneuil had equipped herself in a traveling dress more formidable perhaps than a ball toilette; for a woman beautiful enough to discard ornaments knows how to relegate the charms of her toilette to a second place, and to avail herself of the attractions of a simplicity that proceeds from art. She wore a green dress, charmingly made, and a short jacket or spencer fastened with loops of twisted braid, a costume which fitted the outlines of her form with a subtlety scarcely girlish, and displayed her slender figure and grace-

ful movements. She came in smiling, with the amiability natural to a woman who can disclose a set of even teeth, white as porcelain, between two red lips, and a couple of fresh childish dimples in her cheeks. She had discarded the bonnet, which at first had almost hidden her face from the young sailor, and could employ the numerous apparently unconscious little devices by which a woman displays or enhances the charms of her face and the graces of her head. A certain harmony between her manners and her toilette made her seem so youthful that Madame du Gua thought herself liberal in allowing her some twenty years of age.

The coquetry of this change of costume, which showed a deliberate effort to please, might have aroused hope in the young man, but Mlle. de Verneuil bowed slightly without looking at him, and left him to himself with a careless cheerfulness that disconcerted him. Her reserve seemed to unaccustomed eyes to indicate neither coquetry nor prudence, but simple indifference, real or affected. The ingenuous expression which she knew how to assume was inscrutable. There was not a trace in her manner of the anticipation of a conquest; the pretty ways which had already flattered and deceived the young man's self-love seemed native to her. So the stranger took his place somewhat put out.

Mlle. de Verneuil took Francine's hand and addressed Mme. du Gua in conciliatory tones:

"Madame, will you be so good as to allow this girl to breakfast with us? She is rather a friend than a servant, and in these stormy times devotion can only be repaid by friendship; indeed, what else is there left to us?" To this last observation, made in a lowered voice, Mme. du Gua replied by a somewhat stiff and mutilated courtesy that revealed her annoyance at coming in contact with so pretty a woman. She stooped to whisper in her son's ear:

"Oh! 'stormy times,' 'devotion,' 'madame,' and the waiting woman; this is not Mlle. de Verneuil, but some creature sent by Fouché."

Mlle. de Verneuil became aware of Corentin's presence

as they seated themselves; he still submitted the strangers to a narrow inspection, under which they seemed rather uneasy.

"Citizen," she said, "I am sure you are too well bred to wish to follow me about in this way. The Republic sent my relations to the scaffold, but had not the magnanimity to find a guardian for me. So, though against my wish, you have accompanied me so far with a Quixotic courtesy quite unheard of," and she sighed, "I am determined not to permit the protecting care you have expended upon me to become a source of annoyance to you. I am in safety here, and you can leave me."

She looked at him resolutely and scornfully. Corentin understood her, suppressing a lurking smile about the corners of his crafty mouth, and bowed respectfully.

"Citoyenne," said he, "it is always an honor to obey your commands. Beauty is the only queen whom a true Republican can willingly serve."

Mlle. de Verneuil smiled so significantly and joyously at Francine as he went, that Madame du Gua's suspicions were somewhat allayed, albeit prudence had come along with jealousy of Mlle. de Verneuil's perfect loveliness.

"Perhaps she is Mlle. de Verneuil after all," she said to her son.

"How about the escort?" he answered, for vexation had made him discreet in his turn. "Is he her jailer or her protector? Is she a friend or an enemy of the Government?"

Madame du Gua's eyes seemed to say that she meant to go to the bottom of this mystery. Corentin's departure appeared to reassure the young sailor, his face relaxed, but the way in which he looked at Mlle. de Verneuil revealed rather an immoderate love of women in general than the dawning warmth of a respectful passion. On the other hand, the young lady grew more and more reserved, keeping all her friendly words for Madame du Gua, until the young man grew sulky at being left to himself, and in his vexation assumed airs of indifference. It was all lost, it seemed, upon

Mlle. de Verneuil, who appeared to be unaffected, but not shy, and reserved without prudishness. After all, this casual meeting of people who were unlikely to know more of each other called for no special emotion; but a certain constraint, and even a vulgar embarrassment began to spoil any pleasure which Mlle. de Verneuil and the young sailor had expected from it but a moment before. But women have among themselves such strong interests in common, or such a keen desire for emotions, combined with so wonderful an instinct for finding the right thing to say and do, that they can always break the ice on such occasions. So that, as if one thought possessed both ladies, they began to rally their cavalier, rivaled each other in paying him various small attentions, and joked at his expense. This unanimity of plan set him free from constraint. Words and looks began to lose their significance and importance. At the end of half an hour, in fact, the two women, already enemies at heart, were outwardly on the best of terms, while the young sailor found that he preferred Mademoiselle de Verneuil's reserve to her present vivacity. He was so tormented that he angrily wished he had not asked her to join them.

"Madame," said Mademoiselle de Verneuil at last, "is your son always as dull as this?"

"Mademoiselle," broke in the victim, "I was just asking myself what is the good of a pleasure that cannot last. The keenness of my enjoyment is the secret of my dulness."

"Pretty speeches like that are rather courtly for the École polytechnique," she said, laughing.

"His idea was very natural, mademoiselle," said Madame du Gua, who for her own reasons wished to set her guest at ease.

"Come, why do you not laugh?" said the latter, smiling. "How do you look when you weep, if what you are pleased to call 'a pleasure' depresses you like this?"

Her smile, accompanied by a challenge from her eyes which broke through the mask of sedateness, gave some hope to the young sailor. But inspired by her nature, which al-

ways leads a woman to do too much or too little, the more Mlle. de Verneuil seemed to take possession of the young sailor by glances full of the foreshadowing of love, the more she opposed a cool and reserved severity to his gallant expressions—the common tactics which women use to conceal their sentiments. For one moment, and one only, when each had thought to find the other's eyelids lowered, a glance communicated their real thoughts; but they both lowered their eyes as promptly as they had raised them, confounded by the sudden flash that had agitated both their hearts while it enlightened them. In embarrassment at having said so much in a glance, they did not dare to look at each other again. Mlle. de Verneuil, anxious to undeceive the stranger, took refuge in a cool politeness, and even seemed to be impatient for their breakfast to be over.

"You must have suffered much in prison, mademoiselle?" queried Mme. du Gua.

"Alas! madame, I feel as though I had not yet ceased to be a prisoner."

"Is your escort intended to watch you or to watch over you, mademoiselle? Are you suspected by the Republic, or are you dear to it?"

Mlle. de Verneuil felt instinctively that Mme. du Gua took but little interest in her, and the question startled her.

"Madame," she replied, "I hardly know what my precise relations with the Republic are at this moment."

"You make it tremble perhaps," said the young man, somewhat ironically.

"Why do you not respect mademoiselle's secrets?" asked Mme. du Gua.

"The secrets of a young girl who has known nothing of life as yet but its sorrows are not very interesting, madame."

"But the First Consul seems to be exceedingly well disposed," said Mme. du Gua, wishful to keep up a conversation which might tell her something that she wanted to know. "Do they not say that he is about to repeal the law against emigrants!"

"It is quite true, madame," said the other, almost too eagerly perhaps. "Why, then, should we arouse La Vendée and Brittany? Why kindle the flames of insurrection in France?"

This generous outburst, in which she seemed to put a note of self-reproach, moved the young sailor. He looked attentively at Mlle. de Verneuil, but he could read neither hatred nor love in her face. Her face, with its delicate tints that attested the fineness of the skin, was impenetrable. Ungovernable curiosity suddenly attracted him towards this singular being, to whom he had already felt drawn by strong desire.

"But you are going to Mayenne, madame?" she asked after a short pause.

"And if so, mademoiselle?" queried the young man.

"Well, if so, madame, and as your son is in the service of the Republic——"

These words were uttered with seeming carelessness, but she gave a furtive glance at the two strangers, such as only women and diplomatists employ, as she continued, "You must be in fear of the Chouans? An escort is not to be despised. We are almost traveling companions already. Will you come with us to Mayenne?"

Mother and son looked at each other, and the latter spoke.

"I hardly know, mademoiselle, whether I do very discreetly in telling you that matters of great importance require us to be in the district of Fougères to-night, and that so far we have found no means of transport; but women are so generous by nature that I should be ashamed not to trust you But still," he continued, "before we put ourselves in your hands, let us know at any rate if we are likely to issue from them safe and sound. Are you the slave or the mistress of your Republican escort? Forgive the plain speaking of a young sailor, but I see so much that is unusual in your circumstances——"

"In these times, sir, nothing that happens is usual. Believe me, you may accept without hesitation. Above all,"

she spoke with emphasis, "you have no treachery to fear in a straightforward offer made by one who takes no share in party hatreds."

"Even then the journey will have its perils," he answered, with an arch look that gave significance to the commonplace words.

"What are you afraid of now?" she asked, with a mocking smile; "there is no danger that I see, for anybody."

"Is this the woman whose glances reflected my desires, said he to himself. "What a tone to take! Does she mean to entrap me?"

The shrill piercing cry of a screech-owl rang out like a dismal portent; it seemed to come from the chimney.

"What is that?" asked Mademoiselle de Verneuil, with a gesture of surprise. "It is a bad omen for our journey. And how is it that screech-owls hoot in broad daylight hereabout?"

"They do at times," said the young man shortly. "Mademoiselle, perhaps we shall bring you ill-luck. Is not that what you are thinking? We had better not travel together."

This was said with a soberness and gravity that astonished her.

"I have no wish to constrain you, sir," she said with aristocratic impertinence. "Pray let us keep what little liberty the Republic allows us. If your mother were alone, I should insist——"

The heavy footsteps of a soldier sounded from the corridor, and Hulot showed a scowling face.

"Come here, colonel," said Mlle. de Verneuil, smiling and pointing to a chair beside her. "Let us occupy ourselves with affairs of State if we must. But do not look so serious! What is the matter with you? Are there Chouans about?"

The commandant was staring open-mouthed at the stranger, at whom he gazed with close attention.

"Will you take some more hare, mother? Mademoiselle, you are eating nothing," the sailor said to Francine, and he busied himself with his companions.

But there was something so cruelly earnest in Hulot's surprise and Mlle. de Verneuil's attention, that it was dangerous to disregard these facts.

"What is the matter, commandant? Do you happen to know me?" he asked sharply.

"Perhaps," answered the Republican.

"Indeed, I think I have seen you as a visitor at the school."

"I never went to school at all," the commandant answered abruptly. "What sort of school may you come from?"

"The École polytechnique."

"Oh! ah! yes! Those barracks where they train soldiers in the dormitories," replied the commandant, who had an ungovernable dislike of all officers from this scientific seminary. "What corps are you serving in?"

"I am in the navy."

"Ah!" said Hulot, laughing spitefully, "do you know many pupils from that school in the navy? They only turn out officers of artillery and engineers," he went on sternly.

The other was not disconcerted.

"The name I bear has made an exception of me," he answered. "We have all been sailors in our family."

"Ah!" said Hulot; "and what is your family name, citizen?"

"Du Gua Saint-Cyr."

"Then you were not murdered at Mortagne?"

"Ah! A very little more and we must have been," said Madame du Gua; "my son had a couple of balls through——"

"Have you your papers?" said Hulot, who paid no attention to the mother.

"Would you like to read them?" said the young man flippantly, with malice in his blue eyes, as he looked from the scowling commandant to Mlle de Verneuil.

"I am to have a young fool set his wits at me, I suppose," said Hulot. "Give me your papers, or come away with you."

"Come, come, my fine fellow, I am not a recruit. Why should I answer you? Who may you be?"

"I am the commandant of the department," answered Hulot.

"Oh, then this is a very serious matter, and I might be taken with arms in my hands." He held out a glass of Bordeaux wine to the commandant.

"I am not thirsty," said Hulot. "Come, show me your papers."

Just then the tramp of soldiers and the clanking of weapons filled the street. Hulot stepped to the window with a satisfaction that alarmed Mlle. de Verneuil. This sign of concern softened the young man, whose face had grown cold and hard. He searched the pocket of his coat and drew out an elegant portfolio, and from this he selected papers which he handed to the commandant, and which Hulot began to read deliberately, studying the signature on the passport and the face of the suspected traveler. As he proceeded with his scrutiny, the screech owl hooted again, but this time it was plainly in the accents of a human voice.

The commandant returned the papers with a sarcastic expression.

"This is all very fine," he said, "but you must follow me to the district headquarters. I am not fond of music."

"Why take him to the district?" asked Mlle. de Verneuil in a new tone of voice.

"That is no business of yours, young lady," said Hulot, with the usual grimace.

Irritated at this language from the old soldier, and by the way she had been lowered, as it were, in the eyes of a man who had taken a fancy to her, Mlle. de Verneuil dropped the sedate manner which had hitherto been hers, her color rose, and her eyes glowed.

"Tell me, has this young man satisfied the requirements of the law?" she asked gently, though her voice faltered a little.

"Yes, to outward seeming."

"Well, then, I shall expect you to leave him alone 'in outward seeming.' Are you afraid he will escape you? You

are going to escort us to Mayenne; he and his mother will travel in the coach with me. No objections—it is my wish! Now, what is it?" she added when he made his usual little grimace. "Do you still suspect him?"

"To some extent."

"What do you want to do?"

"Nothing but to cool his head a bit with some lead . . A hare-brained boy!" said the commandant, sardonically.

"You are joking, Colonel."

"Come, comrade!" said the commandant, with a movement of the head; "come, let us be off, sharp!"

At this impertinence from Hulot, Mlle. de Verneuil smiled and grew calm.

"Stay where you are," she said to the young man, with a dignified gesture of protection.

"What a splendid head!" he whispered to his mother, who knitted her brows.

Repressed vexation and wounded susceptibilities had brought new beauties into the fair Parisian's face. Every one rose to their feet, Francine, and Mme. du Gua and her son. Mlle. de Verneuil quickly stepped between them and the commandant, who was smiling, and deftly unfastened the loops of braid on her spencer. Then with the heedlessness that possesses a woman whose self-love has been severely wounded, she drew out a letter and handed it at once to the commandant, pleased with her power, and as impatient to exercise it as any child can be to try a new plaything.

"Read it," she said with a sarcastic smile.

Intoxicated with her triumph, she returned towards the young man, with a glance at him in which malice and love were mingled. The brows of both grew lighter, a flush of joy overspread their excited faces, innumerable contending thoughts arose in their minds. Mme. du Gua's glance seemed to say that she attributed Mlle. de Verneuil's generosity rather to love than to charity, and she was certainly quite right. The fair traveler flushed up in the first instance, and modestly lowered her eyelids, as she gathered the meaning

of that feminine glance; but she raised her head again proudly under the menacing accusation, and defiantly met all eyes. Meanwhile, the petrified commandant handed back her letter, countersigned by ministers, and enjoining all persons in authority to obey the orders of the mysterious bearer; but he drew his sword from its sheath, broke it over his knee, and flung down the fragments.

"Mademoiselle, you probably know what you are about; but a Republican has his own ideas and a pride of his own, and I have not yet learned to take my orders from a pretty woman. The First Consul will receive my resignation to-night, and another than Hulot will obey you. When I do not understand a matter, I will not stir in it, especially if I am supposed to understand it and cannot."

There was a moment's silence, soon broken by the young Parisian lady, who went up to the commandant, held out her hand, and said:

"Colonel, although your beard is rather long, you may give me a kiss. You are a man!"

"So I trust, mademoiselle," he answered, as he awkwardly pressed his lips to the hand of this strange girl. "As for you, comrade," and he pointed his finger at him, "you have had a narrow escape."

"The joke has gone quite far enough, commandant; if you like, I will go to the district with you," said the laughing stranger.

"And bring that invisible whistler Marche-à-Terre along with you."

"Marche-à-Terre—who is that?" said the sailor, with every sign of genuine surprise.

"Did not some one whistle a minute ago?"

"If they did," said the other, "what has that to do with me, I wonder? I thought that your men, brought here no doubt to arrest me, were warning you of their approach."

"Was that really what you thought?"

"Eh, *mon Dieu!* Yes. Drink your glass of Bordeaux; it is delicious."

Perplexed by the sailor's astonishment, by the levity of his manner, and the almost childish appearance of his face, with its carefully curled fair hair, the commandant's mind hesitated among endless suspicions. He noticed Madame du Gua, who was trying to read the secret in her son's glances at Mlle. de Verneuil, and suddenly asked her:

"Your age, citoyenne?"

"Alas! the laws of our Republic are growing very merciless, *Monsieur l'Officier*, I am thirty-eight years old."

"May I be shot if I believe a word of it. Marche-à-Terre is about; I heard him whistle, and you are Chouans in disguise. *Tonnerre de Dieu!* I will have the inn surrounded and searched."

A whistle not unlike the sound he spoke of interrupted the commandant's speech. It came from the courtyard. Fortunately, Hulot hurried into the corridor, and did not notice the pallor that overspread Madame du Gua's face at the words. When Hulot beheld the whistler, a postilion harnessing his horse to the coach, his suspicions were allayed. It seemed to him so absurd that Chouans should risk themselves in the midst of Alençon, that he returned in confusion.

"I forgive him, but some day he shall pay dear for the moments he has made us spend here," said the mother gravely, whispering to her son, and at that instant Hulot came into the room again. The brave officer clearly showed on his embarrassed face the expression of a mental struggle between the rigorous claims of duty and his own natural good nature. He still looked surly, perhaps because he thought that he had been mistaken, but he took the glass of Bordeaux and said:

"Excuse me, comrade; but if your School sends out such youngsters for officers——"

"Are there not still younger ones among the brigands?" asked the so-called sailor, laughing.

"For whom did you take my son?" answered Mme. du Gua.

"For the Gars, the leader sent over to the Chouans and Vendeans by the English ministry, and whose style is the Marquis of Montauran."

As he spoke the commandant still kept a close watch on the faces of the two suspected persons. They looked at each other with the peculiar expressions which two presumptuous and ignorant people might assume successively, and which might be translated by this dialogue: "Do you know what this means?"—"No; do you?"—"Not a bit of it."—"What does he mean to say?"—"He is dreaming,"—and there followed the mocking jeer of folly, which thinks itself triumphant.

The mention of the Royalist general's name wrought in Marie de Verneuil's manners and unconcern a sudden alteration, which was only visible to Francine, the one person present who could read the almost imperceptible shades of expression on that young face. Completely baffled, the commandant picked up the two pieces of his sword, and looked at Mlle. de Verneuil. The warmth and excitement in her face had succeeded in stirring his own feelings; he said:

"As for you, mademoiselle, I shall stick to my word, and to-morrow the fragments of my sword shall return to Bonaparte, unless——"

"Eh! What have I to do with your Bonapartes and your Republics, your Chouans, your King, and your Gars?" cried she, repressing with some difficulty an outburst of temper which would have been in very poor taste.

A strange excitement or waywardness brought a brilliant color to her face; it was clear that the whole world would become as nothing to this young girl from the moment when she singled out one living creature in it from all others. But suddenly she forced herself to be calm again, finding that all eyes were turned upon her as upon a principal personage. The commandant rose abruptly. Mlle. de Verneuil, anxious and disturbed, followed him, stopped him in the passage outside, and asked him in earnest tones:

"Had you really very strong reasons for suspecting this young man to be the Gars?"

"*Tonnerre de Dieu!* That popinjay who came along with you, mademoiselle, had just told me that the travelers and courier had all been murdered by the Chouans, which I knew already; but I did *not* know that the name of the dead travelers was du Gua Saint-Cyr!"

"Oh, if Corentin is mixed up in it, I am not surprised at anything any longer," she said, with a gesture of disgust. The commandant withdrew, not daring to look at Mlle. de Verneuil, whose dangerous beauty had already perturbed his heart.

"If I had stayed there for ten more minutes," he said to himself, as he went downstairs, "I should have been fool enough to pick up my sword again to escort her."

Mme. du Gua saw how the young man's eyes were fixed on the door through which Mlle. de Verneuil had made her exit, and spoke in his ear:—

"It is always the same with you! You will only come to your end through some woman or other. The sight of a doll makes you forget everything else. Why did you allow her to breakfast with us? What sort of demoiselle de Verneuil can she be who accepts invitations to breakfast with strangers, has an escort of Blues, and countermands them by a paper kept in reserve in her spencer like a love-letter? She is one of those vile creatures, by means of whom Fouché thinks to entrap you, and that letter which she produced authorized her to make use of the Blues against you."

"Really, madame," said the young man in a sharp tone that cut the lady to the heart and made her cheeks turn white, "her generosity is a flat contradiction to your theories. Be careful to remember that we are only brought together by the interests of the King. Can the universe be other than a void for you, who have had Charette at your feet? Could you live any longer save to avenge him?"

The lady stood lost in thought, like a man who watches the shipwreck of his fortunes from the strand, and only feels a stronger craving for his lost riches.

Mlle. de Verneuil came back and exchanged with the young man a smile and a look of gentle raillery. The prophecies of hope were the more flattering because the future seemed so uncertain, and the time that they might spend together so very brief.

The glance, however rapid it might be, was not lost on Mme. du Gua's discerning eyes. She saw what it meant, and her brow slightly contracted at once; her jealous thoughts could not be kept entirely unexpressed by her face. Francine was studying this woman; she saw her eyes sparkle and the color glow in her cheeks; a fiendish inspiration seemed to animate her face; she seemed to be in the throes of some horrible convulsion; but this passed like a flash across her features, lightning could not be more rapid, nor death more swift. Mme. du Gua resumed her apparent sprightliness with such ready self-command that Francine thought she had been dreaming. For all that, she trembled as she discerned in the woman before her a nature at least as vehement as Mlle. de Verneuil's, and foresaw the alarming collisions that were sure to come to pass between two minds of this temper. She shuddered again when she saw Mlle. de Verneuil go up to the young officer, fling at him one of those passionate glances that intoxicate, and draw him by both hands towards the window, with mischievous coquetry.

"Now," said she, as she tried to read his eyes, "confess to me that you are not the citizen du Gua Saint-Cyr?"

"Yes; I am, mademoiselle."

"But both he and his mother were murdered the day before yesterday!"

"I am extremely sorry," he answered, smiling at her; "but however that may be, I am none the less obliged to you. I shall always remember you with deep gratitude, and I wish that I were in a position to prove it."

"I thought I had saved an Emigrant; but I like you better as a Republican."

She became embarrassed at the words, which seemed to

have heedlessly dropped from her. Her lips grew redder. There was nothing in her face but a delightfully artless revelation of her feelings. Softly she dropped the young officer's hands, not through bashfulness because she had pressed them, but impelled by a thought within her heart well nigh too heavy to bear. And so she left him intoxicated by his hopes. Then, quite suddenly, she seemed to repent within herself of this freedom, although these passing adventures of travel might seem to justify it. She stood once more on ceremony, took leave of her traveling companions, and vanished with Francine.

When they had reached their room, Francine locked her fingers together, and turned out the palms of her outstretched hands, twisting her arms to do so, as she looked at her mistress, saying, "Ah, Marie! how many things have happened in such a short time! There is no one like you for these goings-on."

Mlle. de Verneuil sprang to Francine and put her arms round her neck.

"This is life!" she cried. "I am in heaven!"

"Or in hell, maybe," Francine answered.

"Yes—hell, if you like!" said Mlle. de Verneuil merrily. "Here, give me your hand; feel how my pulse beats! I am in a fever. Little matters all the world to me now! How often have I not seen him in my dreams! What a fine head that is of his, and how his eyes sparkle!"

"But will he love you?" asked the peasant girl with direct simplicity. Her voice faltered, and her face took a sober expression.

"Can you ask?" replied Mlle. de Verneuil. "Now tell me, Francine," she added, striking a half-comic, half-tragical attitude before her, "would he be so very hard to please?"

"Yes, but will the love last?" Francine answered, smiling.

For a moment the two remained struck dumb—Francine because she had disclosed so much knowledge of life, and

Marie because, for the first time in her existence, she beheld a prospect of happiness in a love affair. She was leaning, as it were, over a precipice; and would fain try its depths, waiting for the sound of the pebble that she had thrown over, and, in the first instance, had thrown heedlessly.

"Ah, that is my business," she said with the gesture of a desperate gambler. "I have no compassion for a woman who is cast off; she has only herself to blame for her desertion. Once in my keeping, I shall know how to retain a man's heart through life and death." There was a moment's pause, and she added in a tone of surprise, "But how did you come by so much experience, Francine?"

"Mademoiselle," said the young country woman eagerly, "I can hear footsteps in the corridor——"

"Ah, not *his*," said the other, listening for them. "So that is the way you answer me! I understand you. I shall wait for your secret, or I shall guess it."

Francine was right. Three raps on the door interrupted their conversation, and Captain Merle soon showed his face after he heard Mlle. de Verneuil's invitation to enter. The captain made a military salute, ventured a sidelong glance at Mlle. de Verneuil, and, dazzled by the beautiful woman before him, could find nothing else to say than, "I am at your orders, mademoiselle!"

"So you have become my protector on the resignation of your chief of demi-brigade. Is not that what your regiment is called?"

"My superior officer, Adjutant-Major Gérard, sent me to you."

"So your commandant is afraid of me?" she inquired.

"Begging your pardon, mademoiselle, Hulot is not afraid; but ladies are not much in his line, you see, and it rather put him out to find his general wearing a mutch."

"It was his duty to obey his superiors for all that," Mlle. de Verneuil replied. "I have a liking for subordination—I give you warning—and I do *not* like resistance to my authority."

"It would be difficult," said Merle.

"Let us talk things over," Mlle. de Verneuil continued. "Your troops here are fresh; they will escort me to Mayenne, which I can reach to-night. Could we find fresh soldiers there so as to set out again at once without a halt? The Chouans do not know of our little expedition. If we travel at night in this way, we should have to be very unlucky indeed to meet with them in numbers sufficient to attack us. Let us see now; tell me if you think the plan feasible?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"How are the roads between Mayenne and Fougères?"

"Rough; and there are everlasting ups and downs—a regular squirrel-track."

"Let us be off at once!" said she; "and as we have no dangers to fear on the outskirts of Alençon, set out first, and we will soon overtake you."

"One might think she had been ten years in command," said Merle to himself as he went out. "Hulot was wrong about her; that girl is not one of the sort that make their living from feather beds. *Mille cartouches!* If Captain Merle means to be Adjutant-Major some day, I advise him not to take St. Michael for the Devil."

Whilst Mlle. de Verneuil was taking counsel with the captain, Francine slipped out, intending to inspect from a corridor window a spot in the courtyard which had attracted her curiosity ever since her arrival in the inn. So rapt was her gaze upon the heap of straw in the stable, that any one might have thought her engaged in prayer before the shrine of the Holy Virgin. Very soon she saw Mme. du Gua picking her way towards Marche-à-Terre with all the caution of a cat that tries not to wet its paws. At sight of the lady the Chouan rose and stood most respectfully before her. This strange occurrence revived Francine's curiosity. She sprang out into the yard, gliding along by the wall so that Mme. du Gua should not see her, and tried to hide herself behind the stable-door. She held her breath, and walked on tiptoe, trying not to make the slightest sound, and succeeded in plac-

ing herself close to Marche-à-Terre without attracting his attention.

"And if, after you have made all these inquiries, you find that is not her name," said the stranger lady to the Chouan, "you will shoot her down without mercy, as if she were a mad dog."

"I understand," said Marche-à-Terre.

The lady went; the Chouan put his red woolen cap on his head again, and stood scratching his ear like a man in doubt, when he saw Francine start up before him as if by magic.

"Saint Anne of Auray!" cried he, and suddenly dropping his whip, he clasped his hands, and stood enraptured. A faint, red flush lit up his rough face, and his eyes shone out like diamonds in the mud.

"Is that really Cottin's lass?" he asked in a stifled voice, audible to himself alone. "Aren't you just grand!" (*godaine*) he went on after a pause. This rather odd word, *godain, godaine,* in the patois of the country, serves rustic wooers to express the highest possible admiration of a combination of beauty and finery.

"I am afraid to touch you," Marche-à-Terre added; but, nevertheless, he stretched out his big hand to Francine to ascertain the weight of a thick gold chain which wound about her throat, and hung down to her waist.

"You had better not, Pierre!" Francine said, inspired by the woman's instinct to tyrannize wherever she is not oppressed. Francine drew back with much dignity after enjoying the Chouan's surprise; but there was plenty of kindliness in her looks to make up for her hard words. She came nearer again. "Pierre," she went on, "was not that lady talking to you about the young lady, my mistress?"

Marche-à-Terre stood in silence; his face, like the dawn, was a struggle between light and darkness. He looked first at Francine, then at the great whip that he had dropped, and finally, back at the gold chain, which seemed to have for him an attraction quite as powerful as the face of the Breton maid; then, as if to put an end to his perplexities, he picked up his whip again, and uttered not a word.

"Oh, it is not difficult to guess that the lady has ordered you to kill my mistress," Francine continued. She knew the scrupulous loyalty of the gars, and wished to overcome his hesitation. Marche-à-Terre nodded significantly. For "Cottin's lass," this was an answer.

"Very well then, Pierre, if anything should happen to her, no matter how slight, or if you should take so much as a hair of her head, we shall have seen each other for the last time; and we shall not even meet in eternity, for I shall be in Paradise, and you will go to hell!"

No demoniac exorcised by the offices of the Church performed in pomp in the days of yore, could have shown more terror than Marche-à-Terre at this prophecy, uttered with a conviction that went far to assure him that it would really come to pass. The uncouth tenderness revealed in his first glances now struggled with a fanatical sense of duty every whit as exacting as love itself. He looked savage all at once as he noticed the air of authority assumed by his innocent former sweetheart. Francine explained the Chouan's glumness in her own fashion.

"So you will do nothing for me?" she said in a reproachful tone. The Chouan gave his sweetheart a look, black as the raven's wing, at the words.

"Are you your own mistress?" asked he, in a growl that no one but Francine could hear.

"Should I be here if I were?" she asked indignantly. "But what are you doing here? Still *Chouanning* and scouring the roads like a mad animal looking for some one to bite. Oh, Pierre, if you were reasonable you would come with me. This pretty young lady, who, I may tell you, was brought up in our house at home, has taken charge of me. I have two hundred livres invested income; mademoiselle gave five hundred crowns to buy my uncle Thomas' big house for me, and I have two thousand livres of savings besides."

But her smile and the enumeration of her riches failed of their effect; she still confronted Marche-à-Terre's inscrutable gaze.

"The *recteurs* have told us to fight," he replied. "There is an indulgence for every Blue that drops."

"But perhaps the Blues will kill you!"

He let his arms fall at his sides by way of reply, as if he regretted the meagreness of his sacrifice for God and the King. "And then what would become of me?" the girl went on sadly.

Marche-à-Terre looked at Francine like a man bereft of his faculties. His eyes seemed to dilate, two tears stole down his rough cheeks and rolled in parallel lines over his goat-skin raiment, a hollow groan came from his chest.

"Saint Anne of Auray! is that all you will say to me, Pierre, after we have been parted for seven years? How changed you are!"

"My love is always the same," the Chouan broke out in gruff tones.

"No," she murmured; "the King comes before me."

"I shall go," he said, "if you look at me in that way."

"Very well then, good-bye," she said sadly.

"Good-bye," echoed Marche-à-Terre. He seized Francine's hand, pressed it in his own and kissed it, made the sign of the cross, and escaped into the stable like some dog that has just purloined a bone.

"Pille-Miche," he called to his comrade, "I cannot see a bit. Have you your snuff-box about you?"

"Oh! *cré bleu,* what a fine chain!" said Pille-Miche, fumbling in a pocket contrived in his goatskin. He held out to Marche-à-Terre a little conical snuff-box, made out of a cow's-horn, in which Bretons keep the snuff that they grind for themselves in the long winter evenings. The Chouan raised his thumb so as to make a cup-shaped hollow in his left hand, as pensioners are wont to do when measuring their pinches of snuff, and shook the horn into it vigorously, Pille-Miche having unscrewed the nozzle. A fine dust was slowly shaken from the tiny hole at the end of this Breton appurtenance. Marche-à-Terre repeated this feat seven or eight times in silence, as if the powder possessed some virtue for changing the currents of his thoughts. Then with a sudder

involuntary gesture of despair, he flung the snuff-box to Pille-Miche and picked up a carbine that lay hidden in the straw.

"There is no use in taking seven or eight pinches at a time like that!" said the niggardly Pille-Miche.

"Forward!" cried Marche-à-Terre hoarsely. "There is some work for us to do." Some thirty Chouans, who were sleeping under the hay racks and in the straw, raised their heads at this, and seeing Marche-à-Terre standing, vanished forthwith through a door which led into some gardens whence they could reach the open country.

When Francine left the stable she found the mail coach ready to start. Mlle. de Verneuil and her two traveling companions were seated in it already. The Breton girl shuddered to see her mistress in the coach with, at her side, the woman who had just given orders to kill her. The "suspect" had placed himself opposite Marie, and as soon as Francine took her seat the heavy coach set out with all speed.

The gray clouds had vanished before the autumn sunlight, which brought a certain revival of gladness to the melancholy fields, as though the year were yet young. Many a pair of lovers read an augury in these signs in the sky. Silence prevailed among the travelers at first, to Francine's great surprise. Mlle. de Verneuil had returned to her former reserve; she kept her head slightly bent and her eyes downcast, while her hands were hidden under a sort of cloak in which she had wrapped herself. If she raised her eyes at all, it was to look at the changing landscape as she was whirled through it. She was secure of admiration, and was declining to take any notice of it, but her indifference seemed scarcely genuine, and suggested coquetry. There is a certain touching purity which dominates every fleeting phase of expression by which weaker souls reveal themselves, but there was no charm of this kind about this being, whose highly wrought temperament had marked her out for the storms of passion. The stranger opposite was as yet altogether taken up with the delights of a newly-begun flirtation, and did not try to reconcile the inconsistencies in this extraordinary

girl—a lofty enthusiast and a coquette. Did not her feigned serenity give him a chance to study her face at his leisure, rendered as beautiful now by repose as before by excitement? We are not very apt to find fault with anything that gives us pleasure.

In a coach it is not easy for a pretty woman to avoid the eyes of her fellow-travelers; they turn to her in search of one more relief from the tedium of the journey. The young officer therefore took a pleasure in studying the striking and clear-cut outlines of her face, delighted to satisfy the cravings of a growing passion by gazing at her as at a picture, without giving annoyance by his persistence or causing the fair stranger to avoid his glances.

Sometimes the daylight brought out the transparent rose-hues of her nostrils, and the double curves that lie between the nose and the upper lip; or a faint sunbeam would shed its light upon every shade of color in her face, on the pearly white about her mouth and eyes, growing to a dead ivory tint at her throat and temples, and the rose-red in her cheeks. He watched admiringly the contrasts of the light and shadow underneath the masses of dark hair about her face, which lent to it one more transient grace; for everything is transient about woman, her yesterday's beauty is not her beauty of to-day, and this is lucky, perhaps, for her.

The sailor, as he called himself, was still at an age when a man finds bliss in the nothings that make up the whole of love; he watched with pleasure the incessant movements of her eyelids; the rise and fall of her bodice as she breathed fascinated him. Sometimes his fancy led him to detect a connection between the expression of her eyes and a scarcely discernible movement of her lips. For him every gesture was a revelation of the young girl's nature, every movement showed her to him in some new aspect. Some thought or other flickered over the rapidly changing features, a sudden flush of color overspread them, or they glowed with life as she smiled; and he would find inexpressible pleasure in the attempt to pene-

trate the secret thoughts of the mysterious woman before him Everything about her was a snare, alike for the senses and the soul. The silence, so far from being a hindrance to an intimate understanding, was forging a chain of thought to unite them both. After several encounters with the stranger's glances Marie de Verneuil saw that this silence would compromise her; so she turned to Mme. du Gua with one of those banal questions that serve to open a conversation; but even then she could not help bringing in a mention of the lady's son.

"How could you bring yourself to put your son into the navy, madame?" said she. "Do you not condemn yourself to a life of constant anxiety?"

"Mademoiselle, it is the lot of women—of mothers, I mean—to tremble constantly for their dearest treasures."

"Your son is very like you."

"Do you think so, mademoiselle?"

This serene acceptance of Mme. du Gua's statement as to her age made the young man smile, and provoked a new malignity in his supposed mother. Every glowing look that her son bent on Marie increased her hatred. Both the silence and the talk inflamed her anger to a fearful pitch, though it was concealed beneath a most amiable manner.

"You are quite mistaken, mademoiselle," said the stranger; "the navy is not more exposed to danger than the other service. Women ought not to dislike the navy, for have we not one immense superiority over the land forces in that we are always faithful to our mistresses?"

"Yes, because you cannot help it," laughed Mlle. de Verneuil.

"But it is faithfulness at any rate," said Mme. du Gua, in an almost melancholy voice.

The conversation grew more lively, turning upon matters which were only interesting to the three travelers. Under circumstances of this kind people with active minds are apt to give new significances to commonplace utterances; but beneath the apparently frivolous cross fire of questions with

which these two amused themselves, the feverish hopes and desires that stirred in them lay concealed. Marie was never off her guard, displaying a tact and astute shrewdness which taught Mme. du Gua that only by employing treachery and slander could she look to triumph over a rival whose wit was as formidable as her beauty.

The travelers overtook the escort, and the coach went less rapidly on its way. The young sailor saw that there was a long hill to climb, and proposed to Mlle. de Verneuil that they should alight and walk. The young man's friendly politeness and courteous tact had its effect on the fair Parisian; he felt her consent to be a compliment.

"Are you of the same opinion, madame?" she asked of Mme. du Gau. "Will you not join our walk?"

"Coquette!" exclaimed the lady as she alighted.

Marie and the stranger walked together, and yet asunder. He already felt himself mastered by vehement desires, and was eager to break through the reserve with which she treated him—a reserve that did not deceive him in the least. He thought to succeed in this by bringing his lively conversational powers to bear upon his companion, with the debonair gaiety of old France, that is sometimes light-hearted, sometimes earnest, readily moved to laughter, but always chivalrous—the spirit that distinguished the prominent men among the exiled aristocracy. But the lively Parisian lady met his attempts at frivolity in so disdainful a humor, rallied him with such malicious reproaches, and showed so marked a preference for the bold and elevated ideas that passed into his talk in spite of himself, that he soon perceived the way to please her.

So the conversation took another turn. The stranger thenceforward fulfilled the promises made by his eloquent face. Every moment he found new difficulties in understanding this siren, who was captivating him more and more; and was compelled to suspend his judgment upon a girl who took a capricious delight in contradicting each conclusion that he formed concerning her. The mere sight of her

beauty had carried him away in the first instance, and now he felt himself strongly drawn towards this strange soul by a curiosity which Marie herself took pleasure in stimulating. Unconsciously their converse assumed a more intimate character; the indifferent tone which Mlle. de Verneuil had unsuccessfully tried to give to it had disappeared entirely.

Although Mme. du Gua had followed the lover-like pair, they had unwittingly walked faster than she did, and soon found themselves about a hundred paces ahead of her. The two picturesque beings were treading the sandy road, absorbed in the childish pleasure of hearing their light footsteps sounding together, pleased that the same spring-like rays of sunlight should envelop them both, glad to breathe the same air with the autumn scent of fallen leaves in it, which seemed to be a nourishment brought by the breeze for the sentimental melancholy of their growing love. Although neither of them appeared to regard their brief companionship as anything but an ordinary adventure, there was something in the sky above them, in the season and in the place, which gave their sentiments a tinge of soberness, and lent an appearance of passion to them. They began to praise the beauty of the day, and then fell to talking of their strange meeting, of the end of the pleasant intercourse so nearly approaching, and of how easy it is to become intimate upon a journey with people, who are lost to sight again almost directly after we meet them. At this last observation, the young man availed himself of a tacit permission which seemed to warrant him in making some sentimental confidences, and in venturing a declaration, like a man accustomed to situations of this kind.

"Do you notice, mademoiselle," he said, "how little our feelings flow in their accustomed channels in these times of terror in which we live? Is there not a striking and unexplainable spontaneity about everything that takes place around us? We love nowadays, or we hate, on the strength of a single glance. We are bound together for life, or we are severed with the same speed that brings us to the scaf-

fold. We do everything in haste, like the nation in its ferment. We cling to each other more closely amid these perils than in the common course of life. Lately, in Paris, we have come to know, as men learn on the battlefield, all that is meant by a grasp of the hand."

"The thirst for a full life in a little space," she said, "was felt then because men used to have so short a time to live."

She gave a rapid glance at her companion, which seemed to put him in mind of the end of their brief journey, and added maliciously, "You have a very fair knowledge of life for a young man just leaving the École polytechnique."

"What do you think of me?" he asked after a moment's pause; "tell me frankly and without hesitation."

"You wish in turn to acquire the right of speaking in like fashion of me?" she queried, laughing.

"You are not answering me," he said after another slight pause. "Beware! silence is very often an answer in itself."

"Did I not guess all that you wished you could tell me? *Eh, mon Dieu!* you have said too much already."

"Oh, if we understand each other," he said, smiling, "I have obtained more than I dared to hope."

She smiled so graciously at this, that she seemed willing to engage in a courteous fence in words, in which a man delights to press a woman closely. Half in jest and half in earnest, they persuaded themselves that it was impossible that, each for each, they could ever be other than they were at that moment. The young man could fairly give himself up to a predilection which had no future before it, and Marie could laugh at him. When, in this way, they had set an imaginary barrier between them, both of them seemed eager to take full advantage of the dangerous liberty which they had just acquired. Marie suddenly slipped on a stone, and stumbled.

"Take my arm," said the stranger.

"I shall have to do so, giddy-pate! because you would grow so conceited if I declined. Would it not look as if I were afraid of you?"

"Ah, mademoiselle!" he said, pressing her arm against him to let her feel the beating of his heart; "you have just made me very vain by this favor."

"Well, then, my readiness to grant it will dispel your illusions."

"Do you want to arm me already against the dangerous emotions you inspire?"

"I beg that you will stop this talk," she said; "do not involve me in a labyrinth of boudoir small-talk and the jargon of drawing-rooms. I do not like to find the sort of ingenuity that any fool can attain to, in a man of your calibre. Look! Here are we, out in the open country, under a glorious sky; everything before us and above us is great. You wish to inform me that I am pretty; is that not so? But I can tell that quite well from your eyes, and moreover I am aware of it; I am not a woman to be gratified by civil speeches. Possibly you would speak to me of your *sentiments?*" she went on, with sardonic emphasis on the last word. "Could you really think me foolish enough to believe in a sudden sympathy powerful enough to control a whole life by the memories of one morning?"

"Not the memories of a morning," he replied, "but of a beautiful woman who has shown herself to be magnanimous as well."

"You forget," she said, laughing, "much greater attractions than these. I am a stranger to you, and everything about me must seem very unusual in your eyes—my name, rank, and position, and my freedom of thought and action."

"You are no stranger to me," he exclaimed. "I have divined your nature; I would not add one perfection more to your completeness, unless it were a little more belief in the love that you inspire at first sight."

"You poor seventeen-year-old boy! You are prating of love already!" she smiled. "Very well, so be it then. It is a stock subject of conversation when any two creatures meet, like the wind and the weather, when we pay a call. Let us take it then. You will find no false modesty nor littleness

in me. I can hear the word 'love' pronounced without blushing. It has been said to me so very often, but not in tones that the heart uses, that it has grown almost meaningless in my ears. I have heard it repeated everywhere, in the theatre, in books and in society, but I have never met with anything that resembled the magnificent sentiment itself."

"Have you looked for it?"

"Yes." The word fell from her so carelessly that the young man started and gazed at Marie as if his views with regard to her character and condition had undergone a sudden change.

"Mademoiselle, are you girl or woman, an angel or a fiend?" he asked with ill-concealed emotion.

"Both the one and the other," she answered him, smiling. "Is there not something both diabolical and angelic in a girl who has never loved, does not love, and possibly never will love?"

"And you are happy for all that?" he asked, with a certain freedom of tone and manner, as if this woman who had liberated him had fallen in his esteem already.

"Happy?" she asked. "Oh, no! When I happen to think how solitary I am, and of the tyranny of social conventions which perforce makes a schemer of me, I envy man his prerogatives. Then at the thought of all the means with which nature has endowed us women, so that we can surround you and entangle you in the meshes of an invisible power that not one of you can resist, my lot here has its attractions for me; and then all at once it seems to me a pitiful thing, and I feel that I should despise a man who could be deceived by these vulgar wiles. Sometimes, in short, I recognize the yoke we must bear with approval; then, again, it is hateful to me, and I rebel against it. Sometimes a longing stirs within me for that lot of devotion which makes a woman so fair and noble a thing, and then again I am consumed by a desire for power. This is perhaps the natural struggle between good and evil instincts, by which everything lives here below. Angel or fiend, did you say? Ah, I do not recognize

my double nature to-day for the first time. We women know our own insufficiency even better than you do. Instinctively we expect in everything a perfection which is no doubt impossible. But," she sighed as she turned her eyes to the sky, "there is one thing which ennobles us in your eyes——"

"And that is——?" asked he.

"Well, that [illegible] fact that we are all struggling more or less against our destiny of incompleteness."

"Mademoiselle, why must we take leave of you to-night?"

"Ah!" she said, smiling at the glowing look the young man turned upon her; "let us go back to the coach, the fresh air is not good for us," and Marie hurried back to it. As the stranger followed he pressed her arm, with scanty respect for her, but in a manner which expressed both his admiration and the feelings which had gained the mastery over him. She quickened her pace; the sailor guessed that she meant to escape from a suit which might be urged upon her; and this made him the more vehemently eager. He risked everything to gain a first favor from this woman, and said diplomatically:

"Shall I tell you a secret?"

"Oh, at once, if it relates to your own affairs."

"I am not in the service of the Republic. Where are you going? I will go with you."

Marie shuddered violently at these words. She withdrew her arm from his and put both hands before her face to hide the red flush, or the pallor it may be, that wrought a change in her features; then in a moment she uncovered her face and said in a tremulous voice:

"So you began as you would fain have ended, by deceiving me?"

"Yes," he said. She turned her back on the bulky coach towards which they were walking, and almost started to run.

"But just now the fresh air was not good——" began the stranger.

"Oh, it is different now," she said with a sad note in her

voice, and she walked on; a storm of thoughts was raging within her.

"You are silent?" the stranger said. His heart was full of joyous anticipation of pleasure to come.

"Oh!" she cried briefly, "how quickly the tragedy has begun!"

"What tragedy are you talking of?" he inquired. She stopped short, scanning the pupil from the École with both fear and curiosity in her looks, then she concealed her troubled feelings beneath an inscrutable serenity; evidently for so young a woman she had no small practical knowledge of life.

"Who are you?" she went on. "But I know who you are. I suspected you at first sight. Are you not the Royalist chief called the Gars? The ex-bishop of Autun was quite right when he cautioned us to believe in our forebodings of ill."

"What interest can there be for you in knowing that fellow?"

"What interest could he have in concealing his identity when I have saved his life already?" She began to laugh, but it was with visible effort. "I did wisely," she said, "when I prevented you from making love to me. Understand this, sir, you are abhorrent to me. I am a Republican, you are a Royalist; I would give you up if I had not passed my word, if I had not saved your life once already, and if——" She broke off. These stormy revulsions of feeling, the struggle which she scarcely troubled herself to hide from him any longer, alarmed the stranger. He tried to watch her, but to no purpose.

"Let us part at once, I will have it so. Good-bye!" said she. She turned sharply from him, took a step or two, and then came back again.

"Nay," she said, "it is of immense importance to me to know who you really are. Do not hide anything; tell me the truth. Who are you? You are no more a pupil of the École polytechnique than a seventeen year old——"

"I am a sailor, ready to leave the sea to follow you wher-

ever your fancy may lead me. If I am fortunate enough to represent a puzzle of some sort to you, I shall be very careful not to extinguish your interest in it. Why should we bring the grave cares of real life into the life of the heart, in which we were coming to understand one another so well?"

"Our souls could have met and known each other," she said earnestly. "But I have no right to demand your confidence, sir. You shall never know the extent of your obligations to me; I will say no more." They went some little way in absolute silence.

"You take a great interest in my life," the stranger began.

"For pity's sake, sir, either give me your name, or do not speak. You are a child, and I am sorry for you," she added, shrugging her shoulders.

The persistent way in which his fellow-traveler set herself to learn his secret brought the supposed sailor into a predicament between ordinary prudence and his desires. A powerful attraction lies in the displeasure of a woman we long to win; and when she yields and relents, no less than in her anger, her sway is absolute; she seizes upon so many fibres of man's heart as she subdues and penetrates it. Was her vexation one more wile of the coquette in Mlle. de Verneuil? In spite of the fever that burned within him, the stranger had sufficient remaining self-control to mistrust a woman who wished to extort his secret of life and death from him. He held the hand which she absently allowed him to take. "Why," said he to himself, "should my blundering, which sought to add a future to to-day, have destroyed all the charm of it instead?"

Mlle. de Verneuil, who seemed to be in great trouble, was silent.

"In what way is it possible that I can give you pain?" he began, "and what can I do to soothe you?"

"Tell me your name." It was his turn to be silent now, and they walked on some steps further. Then Mlle. de

Verneuil suddenly stopped, like some one who has made a momentous decision.

"Marquis of Montauran," she said with dignity, though she could not altogether hide the inward agitation which gave a kind of nervous trembling to her features, "I am happy to do you a service, at whatever personal cost. Here we must separate. The coach and the escort are too necessary for your safety for you to decline to accept either of them. You have nothing to fear from the Republicans; all those soldiers you see are men of honor, and I shall give orders to the adjutant which he will carry out faithfully. I myself shall return on foot to Alençon; my maid and a few of the soldiers will go back with me. Heed me well, for your life is in danger. If before you are in safety you should meet the detestable *muscadin* whom you saw in the inn, then you must fly, for he would immediately give you up. As for me——" here she paused, and then went on in a low voice as she kept back the tears, "I shall plunge once more into the miseries of life with a proud heart. Farewell, sir. May you be happy, and, farewell——"

She beckoned to Captain Merle, who had reached the top of the hill. The young man was not prepared for such a sudden development as this.

"Stay!" he cried with a very fair imitation of despair. The stranger had been so taken by surprise at this singular freak on the girl's part, that though he was ready, at that moment, to sacrifice his life to gain her, he invented a pitiable subterfuge to satisfy Mlle. de Verneuil without revealing his name.

"Your guess was a very near one," he said; "I am an Emigrant under sentence of death, and I am called the Vicomte de Bauvan. I came back to be near my brother in France, drawn by the love of my country. I hope to be struck out of the list through the influence of Mme. de Beauharnais, who is now the First Consul's wife; but if that fails, I mean at any rate to die on French soil—to fall fighting by the side of my friend Montauran. I am going, in the first place,

secretly into Brittany by the help of a passport that I have succeeded in obtaining, to learn if any of my property there yet remains to me."

Mlle. de Verneuil studied the young gentleman as he spoke with keen attention. She tried to weigh the truth of his words, but it was in her nature to be trustful and credulous, and her appearance of tranquillity slowly returned as she asked, "Is all that you have just told me true, sir?"

"Absolutely true," the stranger repeated, who appeared to regard veracity but slightly in his dealings with women. Mlle. de Verneuil heaved a deep sigh like one coming to life again.

"Ah! I am really happy!" cried she.

"So you quite hate my poor Montauran!"

"No," she said; "you cannot understand me. I did not wish that you should be threatened by dangers from which I will try to shield him, since he is your friend."

"Who told you that Montauran was in danger?"

"Oh, sir, if I had not just left Paris, where nothing but his adventure is being talked of, the commandant told us quite sufficient about him at Alençon, I think."

"Then I am going to ask you in what way you could shield him from danger."

"And suppose I should not choose to answer!" she said, with the haughty expression which women so readily assume to conceal their feelings. "What right have you to know my secrets?"

"The right that a man who loves you ought to have."

"Already?——" said she. "No, sir, you do not love me; for you I am simply a fitting object for a passing affair of gallantry. Did I not read your thoughts at the first glance? Could a woman with any experience of good society, as manners are at present, be deceived about you, when she hears a pupil from the École polytechnique choose his expressions as you do, and when he so clumsily disguises his courtly breeding beneath an appearance of Republicanism? There is a trace of powder about your hair, an aristocratic

atmosphere about you which any woman of the world would recognize at once. It was because I trembled for you that I so promptly dismissed my director, whose wits are as keen as a woman's. A genuine Republican officer from the École, sir, would never have thought to make a conquest of me, nor would he have taken me for a good-looking adventuress. Permit me, M. de Bauvan, to put a small piece of feminine reasoning before you. Are you really so young that you do not know that the most difficult conquests to make are of those creatures of our sex whose market value is known and who are satiated with pleasure? To gain that kind of woman, so they say, great inducements are needed, and she only surrenders at her own caprice; to attempt to make any impression upon her would be the acme of self-conceit in a man. Let us leave out of the question the women of the class in which you are so gallant as to include me (because it is understood that they all must be beautiful), and you ought to see that a witty and beautiful young woman of good birth (for you concede those advantages to me) is not to be purchased—there is but one way of winning her, she must be loved. Now you understand me! If she loves, and condescends to folly, there must be something great in it to justify her in her own eyes. Pardon an exuberance of reasoning, not often met with in persons of my sex; but for your own sake, and—for mine," she added, with a bend of her head, "I would not have either of us deceived as to the worth of the other, nor would I have you believe that Mlle. de Verneuil, whether fiend or angel, girl or woman, could allow herself to be captivated by the commonplaces of gallantry."

"Mademoiselle," began the supposed viscount, whose surprise was extreme, although he concealed it, and who suddenly became once more a very fine gentleman, "I beg of you to believe that I will look upon you as a very noble woman, full of lofty and generous feeling, or as a kind-hearted girl —whichever you choose."

"I do not ask so much of you, sir," she said, laughing.

"Leave me my incognito. My mask, moreover, fits more closely than yours does, and it pleases me to retain it, if only that I may know whether people who speak of love to me are sincere. . . . Do not venture to approach me so heedlessly. Hear me, sir," she went on, grasping his arm firmly, "if you could satisfy me that your love was sincere, no power on earth should sunder us. Yes, I could wish to share in the larger life of a man, to be wedded to lofty ambitions and great thoughts. Unfaithfulness is impossible to noble hearts; constancy is a part of their natural strength. I should be always loved, always happy. But yet, I should not be ready at all times to lay myself under the feet of the man I loved as a step upon which he might rise in his career. I could not give up all things for him, endure all things from him, and still love on, even when he had ceased to love me. I have never yet ventured to confide the longings of my own heart to another, nor to speak of the impassioned impulses, of the enthusiasm that consumes me; but I can readily speak to you of them to some extent, because the moment that you are in safety, we shall separate."

"Separate?—never!" he cried, electrified by the tones of her voice, through which a powerful soul vibrated, a soul at strife, as it seemed, with some vast thought.

"Are you free?" she asked with a scornful glance at him which made him shrink.

"Oh, free—yes; but for the sentence of death."

Then she spoke, and her voice was full of bitterness, "If this were not all a dream, what a glorious life ours should be! But let us commit no follies, though I may have talked foolishly. Everything seems doubtful when I think of all that you ought to become before you can appreciate me at my just worth."

"And nothing would be doubtful to me if you would be mine——"

"Hush!" she cried, as she heard the words, with a genuine ring of passion in them; "the air is certainly no longer wholesome for us, let us go back to our chaperons."

It was not long before the coach overtook the two, who resumed their places, and they went on in silence for several leagues. If both of them had plenty to think about, their eyes henceforth avoided each other no more. Each seemed to have, since their conversation, an equal interest in watching the other, and in keeping an important secret hidden; yet each also felt attracted to the other by a desire which had risen to the degree of passion, as each recognized characteristics which enhanced the pleasure they expected to receive from union or from conflict. Perhaps both of them, embarked upon their lives of adventure, had come to the strange condition of mind when, either from weariness, or by way of a challenge to fate, we decline to reflect seriously over the course we are pursuing, and yield ourselves up to the caprices of fortune, precisely because there is but one possible issue, which we behold as the inevitable result of it all. Are there not abysses and declivities in the moral as in the physical world, wherein vigorous natures love to plunge and endanger their existence, with the joy of a gambler who stakes his whole fortune on one throw? Mlle. de Verneuil and the young noble had in a manner come to understand these ideas, which were common to them both since the conversation which had given rise to them; and both had suddenly made great progress when the sympathy of the soul had followed that of their senses. For all that, the more inevitably they felt drawn towards each other, the more they became absorbed in unconsciously counting up the amount of happiness to come for them, if only for the sake of the additional pleasure.

The young man had not recovered from his amazement at the depths of thought in this extraordinary girl; and he began with wondering how she could combine so much experience with such youthful freshness. He next thought that he discerned an intense desire to appear innocent in the studied innocence of Marie's general behavior; he suspected this to be assumed. He took himself to task for his delight, and could only see a clever actress in this fair

stranger. He was quite right. Mlle. de Verneuil, like all girls who have been early thrown on the world, became more and more reserved as her feelings grew warmer; and, very naturally, she assumed that prudish mien which women use successfully to conceal their violent desires. All women would fain meet love with a maiden soul, and when it is theirs no longer, their hypocrisy is a tribute with which they welcome love's coming. These were the thoughts that passed rapidly through the minds of the noble, and gave him pleasure.

Both of them, in fact, could not but make some progress in love by this examination. In this way a lover swiftly reaches the point where the defects in his mistress are so many reasons for loving her the more. Mlle. de Verneuil's meditations lasted longer than those of the Emigrant; perhaps her imagination took flight over a wider stretching future. He was obeying but one of a thousand impulses that go to make up a man's experience in life; but the girl foresaw her whole future, taking a pleasure in making it fair and full of happiness and of great and noble ideas. So in these dreams she was happy, the present and the future, her wild fancies, and the actual reality alike charmed her; and Marie now sought to retrace her steps, the better to establish her power over the young man's heart, acting in this instinctively, as all women do.

After she had determined to surrender herself entirely, she wished, so to speak, to yield inch by inch. She would fain have recalled every action, every look and word in the past, to make them in accord with the dignity of a woman who is loved; her eyes at times expressed a kind of terror as she brooded over the bold attitude she had assumed in their late conversation. But as she looked at his resolute face again, she thought that one so strong must needs be generous too, and exulted within herself that a lot more glorious than that of most other women had fallen to her, in that her lover was a man of powerful character, a man with a death-sentence hanging over him, who had just put his

own life in peril to make war upon the Republic. The thought that such a soul as this was hers alone, with no other to share it, gave a different complexion to everything else. Between that moment, only five hours ago, when she had arranged her face and voice so as to attract this gentleman, and the present, when she could perturb him with a glance, there lay a difference as great as between a dead and a living world. Beneath her frank laughter and blithe coquetry lay a hidden and mighty passion tricked out, like misfortune, in a smile.

In Mlle. de Verneuil's state of mind everything connected with external life partook of the nature of a phantom show. The coach passed through villages, and over hills and valleys, which left no traces in her memory. She reached Mayenne, the escort of soldiers was changed, Merle came to speak to her, and she answered him, she crossed the town, and they went on again;—but faces and houses, streets, and landscapes, and men, passed by her like the shadowy forms of a dream. Night came on. Marie traveled along the road to Fougères by the soft light of the brilliant stars in the sky, and it never struck her that there was any change in the heaven above her. She neither knew where Mayenne was, nor Fougères, nor her own destination; that, in a few hours, she might have to part with the man whom she had chosen, and by whom, as she thought, she herself had been chosen too, was an utter impossibility to her. Love is the one passion which knows neither past nor future. If she betrayed her thoughts in words at times, the sentences that fell from her were almost meaningless, but in her lover's heart they echoed like promises of joy. There were two who looked on at this new-born passion, and its progress under their eyes was alarmingly rapid. Francine knew Marie as thoroughly as the stranger lady knew the young man; and past experience led them to expect in silence some terrific catastrophe. As a matter of fact, it was not long before they saw the close of this drama, which Mlle. de Verneuil had, perhaps, in words of unconscious ill omen, entitled a tragedy.

When the four travelers had come about a league out of Mayenne, they heard a horseman coming towards them at a furious pace. As soon as he caught them up, he bent down and looked in the coach for Mlle. de Verneuil, who recognized Corentin. This ill-omened individual took it upon himself to make a significant gesture with a familiarity which for her had something scathing in it, and then departed, having made her cold and wretched by this vulgar signal.

This occurrence seemed to affect the Emigrant disagreeably, which fact was by no means lost on his supposed mother; but Marie touched him lightly, and her look seemed to seek a refuge in his heart, as if there lay the one shelter that she had on earth. The young man's brow grew clear, as he felt a thrill of emotion, that his mistress should thus have allowed him to see, inadvertently as it were, the extent of her attachment to him. All her coquetry had vanished before an inexplicable dread, and love had shown himself for a moment unveiled. Neither of them spoke, as if the sweet moment so might last a little longer. Unluckily, Mme. du Gua in their midst saw everything; like a miser giving a banquet, she seemed to count their morsels, and to measure out their life.

Altogether absorbed in their happiness, and without a thought of the way they had come, the two lovers arrived at the part of the road which lies along the bottom of the valley of Ernée, forming the first of the three valleys among which the events took place with which this story opened. Francine saw and pointed out strange forms which seemed to move like shadows through the trees and the *ajoncs* that bordered the fields. As the coach came towards these shadows, there was a general discharge of muskets, and the whistling of balls over their heads told the travelers that all these phantoms were substantial enough. The escort had fallen into an ambush.

At this sharp fusilade, Captain Merle keenly regretted his share in Mlle. de Verneuil's miscalculation. She had thought

that the quick night journey would be attended with so little risk, that she had only allowed him to bring sixty men. Acting under Gérard's orders, the captain immediately divided the little troop into two columns to hold the road on either side, and both officers advanced at a running pace through the fields of broom and furze, seeking to engage their adversaries before even learning their numbers. The Blues began to beat up the thick undergrowth right and left with rash intrepidity, and kept up an answering fire upon the bushes of broom from which the Chouan volley had come.

Mlle. de Verneuil's first impulse had led her to spring out of the coach and to run back, so as to put some distance between her and the scene of the fray. But she grew ashamed of her fright; and, under the influence or the desire to grow great in the eyes of her beloved, she stood quite still, and tried to make a cool survey of the fight. The Emigrant followed her, took her hand, and held it to his heart.

"I was frightened," she said, smiling, "but now——"

Just at that moment her terrified maid called to her, "Take care, Marie!" But as Francine attempted to spring from the coach, she felt the grasp of a strong hand arrest her. The heavy weight of that huge hand drew a sharp cry from her; she turned and made not another sound when she recognized Marche-à-Terre's face.

"So I must owe to your fears the disclosure of the sweetest of all secrets for the heart," the stranger said to Mlle. de Verneuil. "Thanks to Francine, I have found out that you are called by the gracious name of Marie—Marie, the name that has been on my lips in every sorrow I have known! Marie, the name that henceforth I shall utter in joy. I shall never more pronounce it without commiting sacrilege, without confusing my religion with my love! But will it be a sin, after all, to love and pray at the same time?" They pressed each other's hands fervently as he spoke, and looked at each other in silence; the strength of their feelings had taken from them all power of expressing them.

"There is no harm meant for you people," Marche-à-

Terre said roughly to Francine. There was a note of menace and reproach in the hoarse guttural sounds of his voice; he laid a stress upon every word in a way that paralyzed the innocent peasant girl.

For the first time she was confronted with cruelty in Marche-à-Terre's expression. Moonlight seemed the only suitable illumination for such a face. The fierce Breton, with his cap in one hand and his heavy carbine in the other, and with his squat gnome-like form in the cold white rays of light which give everything an unfamiliar look, seemed to belong rather to fairyland than to this world. There was a shadowy swiftness about the coming of this phantom and his reproachful exclamation. He turned immediately to Mme. du Gua and exchanged some earnest words with her. Francine had forgotten her Bas Breton, and could make nothing of their talk. The lady seemed to be giving a complication of orders to Marche-à-Terre, and the short conference was terminated by an imperious gesticulation on her part, as she pointed out the two lovers to the Chouan.

Before he obeyed her, Marche-à-Terre gave Francine one last look. He seemed to be sorry for her, and would have spoken, but the Breton girl felt that her lover was obliged to keep silent. There were furrows in the rough sun-burned skin on his forehead; the man's brows were drawn together in a heavy frown. Would he disobey this renewed order to take Mlle. de Verneuil's life? Mme. du Gua, no doubt, thought him the more hideous for this grimace, but to Francine there was an almost tender gleam in his eyes. The look told her that it was in her woman's power to direct that fierce will, and she hoped yet to establish her sway after God's in this wild heart.

Marie's tender conversation was interrupted by Mme. du Gua, who caught hold of her with a cry, as if danger was at hand. She had recognized one of the Royalist Committee from Alençon, and her sole object was to gain for him an opportunity of speaking to the Emigrant.

"Mistrust the girl whom you met at the sign of the 'Three

Moors!" so said the Chevalier de Valois in the young man's ear, and then both he and the Breton pony which he rode disappeared in the bushes of broom whence he had issued. The sharp rolling fire of the skirmish became at this moment astonishingly hot, but the combatants could not come to close quarters.

"Is not this attack a feint, adjutant, so that they may kidnap our travelers and hold them for ransom?" suggested Clef-des-Cœurs.

"Devil fetch me, you are on the right tack!" was Gérard's answer, as he flung himself on the road.

The Chouan fire grew slacker. They had gained their object in the skirmish when the Chevalier's communication was made to the chief. Merle saw them drawing off through the hedges, a few at a time, and did not consider it expedient to engage in a useless and dangerous struggle. The captain had a chance to hand Mlle. de Verneuil back into the carriage, for there stood the noble, like one thunderstruck. The Parisian in her surprise got in without availing herself of the Republican's courtesy; she turned to look at her lover, saw him standing there motionless, and was bewildered by the sudden change just wrought in him by the Chevalier's words. Slowly the young Emigrant returned; his manner disclosed a feeling of intense disgust.

"Was I not right?" Mme. du Gua said in his ear, as she went back with him to the coach. "We are certainly in the hands of a creature who has struck a bargain for your life; but since she is fool enough to be smitten with you instead of attending to her business, do not behave yourself like a child but pretend that you love her until we reach the Vivetière, and once there—Is he really in love with her already?" she added to herself, for the young man did not move, and stood like one lost in dreams.

The coach rolled on almost noiselessly over the sandy road. At the first glance round about her everything seemed changed for Mlle. de Verneuil. The shadow of death had stolen across love already. The differences were the merest

shades perhaps; but such shades as these are as strongly marked as the most glaring hues for a woman who loves. Francine had learned from Marche-à-Terre's expression that Mlle. de Verneuil's fate, over which she had bidden him to watch, was in other hands than his. Whenever she met her mistress' eyes, she turned pale, and could scarcely keep back the tears. The rancor prompting a feminine revenge was but ill concealed by the feigned smiles of the stranger lady. The sudden change in her manner, the elaborate kindness for Mlle. de Verneuil, infused into her voice and expression, was sufficient to alarm any quick-sighted woman. Mlle. de Verneuil shuddered instinctively, and asked herself, "Why did I shudder? Is she not his mother?" But she trembled in every limb as she suddenly asked herself, "But is she really his mother?" Then she saw the precipice before her, and a final glance at the man's face made it plain to her.

"This woman loves him!" she thought. "But why should she overwhelm me with attentions after having shown so much coolness to me? Is it possible that she fears me, or am I lost?"

As for the *Émigré*, he was red and pale by turns; he retained his apparently calm manner by lowering his eyes, to conceal the strange emotions that warred within him. His lips were pressed together so tightly that their gracious curving outlines were disturbed; a yellowish tint, due to the violent conflict in his mind, overspread his face. Mlle. de Verneuil could not even discover if there was a lingering trace of love in all this passion. Woods lined the road on either side at this spot, and it became so dark that the mute actors in the drama could no longer question each other with their eyes. The sough of the wind rustling through the woods, and the even paces of their escort, gave a tinge of awe to the time and place, a solemnity that quickens the beating of the heart.

Mlle. de Verneuil could not long seek in vain for the cause of the estrangement. The recollection of Corentin

flashed through her mind, and with that the idea of her real destiny rose up suddenly before her. For the first time since the morning, she fell to thinking seriously over her position. Hitherto she had given herself up to the joy of being loved, without a thought of the future or of the past. She grew unable to bear her agony of soul any longer alone, and, with the meek patience of love, sat waiting, beseeching one glance of the young man. There was such a touching eloquence about her mute passionate entreaty, her shudder, and her white face, that he wavered a moment—the catastrophe was but the more complete.

"Are you feeling ill, mademoiselle?" he inquired. There was no trace of tenderness in his voice. His look and gesture, the very question itself, all served to convince the poor girl that all that had happened during the day had been part of a soul-mirage, which was now dispersing as half-formed clouds are borne away by the wind.

"Am I feeling ill?" she replied, with a constrained laugh: "I was just going to put the same question to you."

"I thought you both understood each other," said Mme. du Gua, with assumed good-nature.

But neither Mlle. de Verneuil nor the young noble made her any answer. The girl thus grievously offended for the second time was vexed to find that her all-powerful beauty had lost its force. She knew that she could discover the reason of this state of things whenever she chose, but she was not anxious to look into it; and for the first time, perhaps, a woman shrank back from learning a secret. There are in our lives far too many situations when, either by dint of overmuch thinking, or through some heavy calamity, our ideas become disconnected, have no foundation in fact, and no basis to start from; the links that bind the present to the future and to the past are severed. This was Mlle. de Verneuil's condition. She bowed her head, lay back in the carriage, and stayed in this position like an uprooted shrub. She took no notice of any one, she saw nothing around her, but suffered in silence, wrapping herself about in her sor-

row, a deliberate dweller in the solitary world whither unhappiness betakes itself for shelter. Some ravens flew croaking over them; but although in her, as in all strong natures, there was a superstitious spot, she gave no heed to them. The travelers went on their way in silence for some time.

"Sundered already!" said Mlle. de Verneuil to herself. "And yet nothing about me could have told him! Could it have been Corentin? But it is not to Corentin's interest. Who can have risen up to accuse me? I have scarcely been beloved, and here already I am aghast at being forsaken. I have sown love, and I reap contempt. So it is decreed by fate that I shall never do more than see the happiness that I must always lose!"

There was a trouble within her heart that was new in her experience, for she really loved now, and for the first time. But she was not so overcome by her pain that she could not oppose to it the pride natural to a young and beautiful woman. Her love was still her own secret; the secret that torture often fails to draw had not escaped her. She raised her head, ashamed that her mute suffering should indicate the extent of the passion within her, showed a smiling face, or rather a smiling mask, gave a gay little shake of the head, controlling her voice, so as to show no sign of the change in it.

"Where are we now?" she asked of Captain Merle, who always kept at a little distance from the coach.

"Three leagues and a half from Fougères, mademoiselle."

"Then we shall very soon be there now," said she, to induce him to begin to talk, her mind being fully made up to favor the young captain with some mark of her consideration.

"Those leagues," replied the delighted Merle, "are no great matter, except that hereabouts they never let anything come to an end. As soon as you reach the upland at the top of this hill that we are climbing, you will see another valley just like the one we are leaving behind, and then on the

horizon you see the top of La Pèlerine. God send that the Chouans will be so obliging as not to have their revenge up there. But as you can suppose, we don't get on very fast, going up and down hill in this way. From La Pèlerine again you will see——"

The Emigrant trembled slightly at that word for the second time, but so slightly that Mlle. de Verneuil alone observed it.

"What may this La Pèlerine be?" the girl inquired vivaciously, interrupting the captain, who was quite taken up by his Breton topography.

"It is the summit of a hill," Merle answered. "It gives its name to the valley here in Maine, which we are just going to enter. The hill is the dividing line between that province and the valley of the Couësnon; Fougères lies at the very end of the valley, and that is the first town you come to in Brittany. We had a fight there against the Gars and his bandits at the end of Vendémiaire. We were bringing over some conscripts, and they had a mind to kill us on the border so as to stop in their own country; but Hulot is a tough customer, and he gave them——"

"Then you must have seen the Gars?" she asked. "What sort of man is he?" and all the time her keen malicious eyes were never withdrawn from the pretended Vicomte de Bauvan's face.

"*Oh, mon Dieu!* mademoiselle," replied Merle, interrupted again as usual; "he is so very much like the citizen du Gua, that if it were not for the uniform of the École polytechnique that he is wearing, I would bet it was the same man."

Mlle. de Verneuil stared hard at the cool and impassive young man who was looking contemptuously back at her, but she could see nothing about him that revealed any feeling of fear. By a bitter smile she let him know that she had just discovered the secret he had so dishonorably kept. Then her nostrils dilated with joy; she bent her head to one side, so that she could scrutinize the young noble, and at the same time keep Merle in view, and said to the Republican in a mocking voice:

"This chief is giving the First Consul a good deal of anxiety, captain. There is plenty of daring in him, they say, but he will engage in adventures of certain kinds like a hare-brained boy, especially if there is a woman in the case."

"We are just reckoning upon that to square our accounts with him," said the captain. "If we can get hold of him for a couple of hours, we will put a little lead in those brains of his. If he were to come across us, the fellow from Coblentz would do as much for us, he would turn us off into the dark, so it is tit for tat." "Oh, you have nothing to fear," said the Emigrant. "Your soldiers will never get as far as La Pèlerine; they are too tired; so if you agree to it, they could take a rest only a step or two from here. My mother will alight at the Vivetière, and there is the road leading to it, a few gunshots away. These two ladies would be glad to rest there too; they must be tired after coming without a break in the journey from Alençon hither." He turned to his mistress with constrained politeness as he went on— "And, since mademoiselle has been so generous as to make our journey safe as well as pleasant, perhaps she will condescend to accept an invitation to sup with my mother? Times, in fact, are not so distracted, but that a hogshead of cider can be found at the Vivetière to tap for your men. The Gars will not have made off with everything; or so my mother thinks, at any rate——"

"Your mother?" interrupted Mlle. de Verneuil satirically, without making any response to the strange invitation which was held out to her.

"Does my age seem no longer credible to you now that the evening has come, mademoiselle?" asked Mme. du Gua. "I was unfortunately married while very young; my son was born when I was fifteen——"

"Are you not mistaken, madame? Should you not have said thirty?"

Madame du Gua turned pale as she swallowed this piece of sarcasm. She longed for the power to avenge herself,

and yet must perforce smile. At all costs to herself, even by the endurance of the most stinging epigrams, she wished to discover the girl's motives of action, so she pretended not to have understood.

"The Chouans have never had a leader so cruel as this one, if we are to believe the rumors that are flying about concerning him," she said, speaking at the same time to Francine and Francine's mistress.

"Oh! I do not believe he is cruel," Mlle. de Verneuil answered, "but he can lie, and to me he seems exceedingly credulous; the leader of a party ought to be the dupe of no one."

"Do you know him?" asked the Emigrant coolly.

"No," she answered, with a contemptuous glance at him, "but I thought I knew him."

"Oh, mademoiselle, he is a shrewd one, and no mistake!" said the captain, shaking his head and giving to the word he used (*malin*) by an eloquent gesture the peculiar shade of meaning which it then possessed, and has since lost. "These old families sometimes send out vigorous offshoots. They come over here from a country where the *ci-devants,* so they say, have by no means an easy time of it; and men are like medlars, you know—they ripen best on straw. If the fellow has a head on his shoulders, he can lead us a dance for a long while yet. He thoroughly understood how to oppose his irregular troops to our free companies, and so paralyze the efforts of the Government. For every Royalist village that is burned he burns two for the Republicans. He has spread his operations over a vast tract of country, and in that way he compels us to bring a considerable number of troops into the field, and that at a time when we have none to spare! Oh, he understands his business!"

"He is murdering his own country," said Gérard, interrupting the captain with his powerful voice.

"But if his death is to deliver the country," said the young gentleman, "shoot him down, and be quick about it."

Then he tried to fathom Mlle. de Verneuil's mind with

a glance; and of the dramatic vivacity of the mute scene that passed between them, and its subtle swiftness, words can give but a very imperfect idea. Danger makes people interesting. The vilest criminal excites some measure of pity when it comes to be a question of his death. So Mlle. de Verneuil, being by this time quite certain that the lover who had scorned her was the formidable rebel leader, did not seek to reassure herself on this head by keeping him on the rack; she had a quite different curiosity to satisfy. She preferred to trust or to doubt him, as her passion dictated, and set herself to play with edged tools. She indicated the soldiers to the young chieftain in a glance full of treacherous derision; dangling the idea of his danger before him, amusing herself with making him painfully aware that his life hung on a word which her lips seemed to be opening to pronounce. She seemed, like an American Indian, to be ready to detect the movement of any nerve in the face of an enemy bound to the stake, flourishing her tomahawk with a certain grace; enjoying a revenge unstained by crime, dealing out to him his punishment like a mistress who has not ceased to love.

"If I had a son like yours, madam," she said to the visibly terrified stranger, "I should put on mourning for him on the day when I sent him forth into danger."

She received no reply. Again and again she turned her head towards the two officers, and then looked sharply at Mme. du Gua; but she could not detect that there was any secret signal passing between the lady and the Gars, such as could assure her of an intimacy which she suspected, and yet wished not to credit. A woman likes so much to maintain the suspense of a life-and-death struggle when a word from her will decide the issue. The young general bore the torture which Mlle. de Verneuil inflicted upon him without flinching, and with smiling serenity; the expression of his face and his bearing altogether showed that he was a man utterly unaffected by the perils he underwent, and now and then he seemed to tell her, "Here is your opportunity for

avenging your wounded vanity! Seize upon it! I should be in despair if I had to resign the feeling of contempt which I have for you."

Mlle. de Verneuil began to scrutinize the chief from her position of vantage, with a haughty insolence, which was quite superficial, for at the bottom of her heart she was admiring his tranquil courage. Glad as she was to make the discovery of the ancient name that her lover bore (for all women love the privileges which a title confers), she was still further delighted to confront him in his present position. He was the champion of a cause ennobled by its misfortunes; he was exerting every faculty of a powerful character in a struggle with a Republic that had been so many a time victorious. She saw him now, face to face with imminent danger, displaying the dauntless valor that has such a powerful effect on women's hearts. Over and over again she put him through the ordeal, perhaps in obedience to an instinct which leads womankind to play with a victim, as a cat plays with the mouse that she has caught.

"What law is your authority for putting Chouans to death?" she asked of Captain Merle.

"The law of the fourteenth of last Fructidor. The revolted departments are put outside the civil jurisdiction, and courts-martial are established instead," replied the Republican.

"To what cause do I owe the honor of your scrutiny of me?" she inquired of the young chief, who was watching her attentively.

"To a feeling which a gentleman hardly knows how to express in speaking to a woman, whatever she may be," said the Marquis of Montauran in a low voice, as he leaned over towards her; then he went on aloud, "We must needs live in such times as these, to see girls in your station do the office of the executioner, and improve upon him in their deft way of playing with the axe——"

Her eyes were set in a stare on Montauran; then in her exultation at receiving this insult from a man whose life

lay between her hands as he spoke, she whispered in his ear with gentle malice as she laughed:

"Your head is so wrong that the executioners will none of it. I shall keep it for my own."

The bewildered marquis in his turn gazed at this unaccountable girl for a moment. The love in her had prevailed over everything else, even over the most scathing insults, and her revenge had taken the form of pardoning an offence which women never forgive. The expression of his eyes grew less cold and hard, a touch of melancholy stole over his features. His passion had a stronger hold upon him than he had recognized. These faint tokens of the reconciliation she looked for satisfied Mlle. de Verneuil. She looked tenderly at the chief; the smile she gave him seemed a caress; then she lay back in the coach, unwilling to endanger the future in the drama of her happiness, and in full belief that that smile of hers had once more tightened the knot that bound them. She was so beautiful! She knew so well how to clear away all obstacles in love's course! She was so thoroughly accustomed to take all things as a pastime, to live as chance determined! She had such a love of the unforeseen and of the storms of life!

Very soon, in obedience to orders from the Marquis, the coach left the highroad and turned off towards the Vivetière, along a cross-road in a hollow shut in on either side by high banks, planted with apple trees, which made their way seem more of a ditch than a road, properly speaking. The travelers gradually left the Blues behind them, as they reached the manor house; its gray roofs appearing and vanishing alternately through the trees along the way. Several soldiers were left behind engaged in extricating their shoes from the stiff clay. "This is like the road to Paradise with a vengeance," cried Beau-Pied.

Thanks to the postilion, who had been there before, it was not very long before Mlle. de Verneuil came in sight of the château of the Vivetière. The house lay on the slope of a sort of promontory between two deep ponds which al-

most surrounded it, so that it was only possible to reach the mansion by following one narrow causeway. That part of the peninsula on which the house and gardens stood was protected at some distance from the back of the château by a wide moat which received all the overflow from the two ponds with which it communicated. In this way an island was formed, which was an almost impregnable retreat, and therefore invaluable for a party leader, who could only be surprised here by treachery.

As the gate creaked on its rusty hinges, and she passed under the pointed archway that had been ruined in the previous war, Mlle. de Verneuil stretched out her head. The gloomy colors of the picture presented to her gaze all but effaced the thoughts of love and coquetry with which she had been soothing herself. The coach entered a great courtyard, almost square in shape, and bounded by the steep banks of the ponds. These rough embankments were kept dank by the water with its great patches of green weed, and bore such trees as love marshy places, for their sole adornment. They stood leafless now. The stunted trunks and huge heads gray with lichens rose above the reeds and undergrowth like misshapen dwarfs. These uncomely hedges seemed to have a sort of life in them, and to find a language when the frogs escaped from them, croaking as they went; and the water-hens, in alarm at the sounds made by the coach, flew and splashed across the surface of the pools. The courtyard, surrounded by tall withered grasses, gorse, dwarf shrubs and creeping plants, put an end to any preconceived ideas of order or of splendor.

The château itself seemed to have been a long while deserted. The roofs appeared to bend under an accumulation of vegetable growths; and although the walls were built very solidly of the schistous stone of the district, there were numerous cracks where the ivy had found a hold. The château fronted the pond, and consisted of two wings which met at right angles in a high tower, and that was all. The doors and shutters hung loose and rotten: the balustrades

were eaten with rust; and these, like the crazy windows, looked as if the first breath of a storm would bring them down. A shrewd wind whistled through the ruinous place, and in the uncertain moonlight the great house had a spectral appearance and character. The cold grays and blues of the granitic stone, combined with the tawny brown and black of the schist, must have been actually seen, before the accuracy of the image called up at first sight by this dark empty carcase of a house can be appreciated. It looked exactly like a skeleton with the fissures in its masonry, its unglazed windows, the embrasures in the battlements of the tower seen against the sky, and the roofs that let the light through; the birds of prey that flew shrieking about it added one more feature to the vague resemblance. A few lofty fir-trees behind the house showed their dark waving foliage above the roofs, and some yew trees that had once been trimmed as a sort of ornament to the corners, now made for it a setting of dismal festoons like palls at a funeral.

The shape of the doorways, the clumsiness of the ornaments, the want of symmetry in the construction, and everything, in fact, about the mansion, showed that it was one of those feudal manor-houses of which Brittany is proud; not without reason it may be, for in this Celtic land they form monuments to the nebulous history of a time when as yet the monarchy was not established. In Mlle. de Verneuil's imagination the word "château" always called up a conventional type, so that she was greatly struck with the funeral aspect of the picture before her. She sprang lightly from the coach, and stood by herself looking about her in dismay, and meditating on the part that she ought to play.

Francine heard Mme. du Gua give a sigh of joy when she found herself free of the escort of Blues; and an involuntary exclamation broke from her when the gate was shut, and she found herself within this kind of natural fortress. Montauran had hurried eagerly to Mlle. de Verneuil; he guessed the nature of the thoughts that filled her mind.

"This château," he said, with a shade of melancholy in his

voice, "was ruined in the war, just as the plans which I projected for our happiness have been ruined by you."

"And in what way?" she inquired in utter astonishment.

"Are you a *beautiful young woman, witty* and *nobly born?*" he said in caustic tones, repeating for her the words which she had spoken so coquettishly during their conversation by the way.

"Who has told you otherwise?"

"Friends of mine, worthy of credence, who are deeply interested in my safety, and are on the watch to baffle treachery."

"Treachery!" said she, with a satirical look. "Are Alençon and Hulot so far away already? You have a poor memory, a perilous defect in the leader of a party! But if friends begin to exert so powerful a sway over your heart," she went on with matchless insolence, "pray keep your friends. There is nothing which can be compared with the pleasures of friendship. Farewell! for neither I nor the soldiers of the Republic will enter here!"

She darted towards the gateway in her wounded pride and scorn, but there was a dignity and a desperation about her flight that wrought a change in the ideas of the Marquis concerning her. He could not but be imprudent and credulous, for he could only forego his desires at too great a cost to himself. He, also, was already in love, so that neither of the lovers had any wish to protract their quarrel.

"Only a word, and I believe you," he said, with entreaty in his voice.

"A word?" she answered in an ironical tone, "not so much as a gesture," and her lips were tightly strained together.

"Scold me at any rate," he entreated, trying to take the hand which she withdrew, "if, indeed, you dare to pout with a rebel chieftain, who is now as sullen and suspicious as he was formerly light-hearted and confiding."

There was no anger in Marie's look, so the Marquis went on, "You have my secret, and I have not yours."

A darker shade seemed to cross her alabaster brow at the words. Marie looked angrily at the chief and replied, "My secret? Never!"

Every word, every glance, has at the moment its own eloquence, in love; but Mlle. de Verneuil's words had conveyed no definite meaning, and for Montauran, clever as he might be, the significance of her exclamation remained undecipherable. And yet her woman's voice had betrayed an emotion by no means ordinary, which was still in evidence to excite his curiosity.

"You have a pleasant way of dispelling suspicions," he began.

"So you still harbor them?" she inquired, and her eyes scanned him curiously as if to say, "Have you any rights over me?"

"Mademoiselle," said the young man, who looked at once submissive and resolute, "the authority you exercise over the Republican troops, and this escort——"

"Ah, that reminds me? Are we, my escort and I (your protectors as a matter of fact), in security here?" she asked with a trace of irony.

"Yes, on my faith as a gentleman! Whoever you may be, you and yours have nothing to fear in my house."

The impulse that prompted this pledge was evidently so generous and so staunch that Mlle. de Verneuil could not but feel absolutely at rest as to the fate of the Republicans. She was about to speak, when Mme. du Gua's presence imposed silence upon her. Mme. du Gua had either overheard the conversation of the two lovers, or she had partly guessed at it, and it was in consequence no ordinary anxiety that she felt when she saw them in a position which no longer implied the slightest unfriendliness. At sight of her, the Marquis offered his hand to Mlle. de Verneuil, and went quickly towards the house, as if to rid himself of an intrusive companion.

"I am in the way," said the stranger lady to herself, without moving from the place where she stood. She watched

the two reconciled lovers, moving slowly now, on their way to the entrance flight of steps, where they came to a stand that they might talk, so soon as they had put a distance between themselves and her.

"Yes, yes, I am in their way!" she went on, speaking to herself; "but in a little while the creature yonder will not be in *my* way any longer; the pond, *pardieu!* shall be her grave. I shall not violate your 'faith as a gentleman.' Once under that water, what is there to fear? Will she not be safe, down below there?"

She was staring at the calm mirror-like surface of the little lake to the right of the courtyard, when she heard a rustling sound among the briers on the embankment, and by the light of the moon she saw Marche-à-Terre's face rise up above the knotty trunk of an old willow-tree. One had to know the Chouan well to make him out among the confusion of pollard trunks, for one of which he might readily be taken. First of all, Mme. du Gua looked suspiciously round about her. She saw the postilion leading the horses round into a stable, situated in that wing of the château which fronted the bank where Marche-à-Terre was hiding; she watched Francine go towards the two lovers, who had forgotten everything else on earth just then; and she came forward with a finger on her lips to enjoin absolute silence, so that the Chouan rather understood than heard the words that followed next, "How many are there of you here?"

"Eighty-seven."

"*They* are only sixty-five, for I counted them."

"Good," the savage answered with cruel satisfaction. Heedful of Francine's slightest movement, the Chouan vanished into the hollow willow trunk, as he saw her return to keep a lookout for the woman whom her instinct told her to watch as an enemy.

Seven or eight people appeared at the top of the steps, brought out by the sounds of the arrival of the coach.

"It is the Gars!" they exclaimed. "It is he; here he is!"

Others came running up at their exclamations, and the

talk between the two lovers was interrupted by their presence. The Marquis of Montauran made a rush toward these gentlemen, called for silence with an imperative gesture, and made them look at the top of the avenue through which the Republican soldiers were defiling. At the sight of the familiar blue uniform turned up with red, and the gleaming bayonets, the astonished conspirators exclaimed:

"Can you have come back to betray us?"

"I should not warn you of the peril if I had," said the Marquis smiling bitterly. "Those Blues," he went on after a pausé, "are this young lady's escort. Her generosity rescued us, by a miracle, from a danger which all but overwhelmed us in an inn in Alençon. We will give you the history of the adventure. Mademoiselle and her escort are here on my parole, and must be welcomed as friends."

Mme. du Gua and Francine having come as far as the flight of steps, the Marquis gallantly presented his hand to Mlle. de Verneuil, the group of gentlemen fell back into two rows in order to let them pass, and every one tried to discern the features of the newcomer; for Mme. du Gua had already stimulated their curiosity by making several furtive signs to them.

In the first room Mlle. de Verneuil saw a large table handsomely furnished and set for a score of guests. The dining-room opened into a vast saloon, where the company were very soon assembled together. Both apartments were in keeping with the appearance of dilapidation about the exterior of the château. The wainscot was of polished walnut, ill carved with poor and rough designs in bold relief; but it was split by great cracks, and seemed ready to fall to pieces. The dark color of the wood seemed to make the mirrorless and curtainless rooms more dismal yet; and the antiquated and crazy furniture matched the ruinous aspect of everything else. Marie noticed maps and plans lying out unrolled upon a great table, and a stack of weapons and rifles in a corner of the room. Everything spoke of an important conference among the Vendean and Chouan chiefs.

The Marquis led Mlle. de Verneuil to an enormous worm-eaten armchair which stood beside the hearth, and Francine took up her position behind her mistress, leaning upon the back of the venerable piece of furniture.

"You will give me leave to do my duty as host for a moment?" said the Marquis, as he left the two newcomers to mingle with the groups his guests had formed.

Francine saw how at a word or two from Montauran, the chiefs hastily concealed their weapons and maps and anything else which could arouse the suspicions of the Republican officers. One or two of the chiefs divested themselves of their wide leather belts, furnished with hunting-knives and pistols. The Marquis recommended the greatest discretion, and left the room, apologizing for the absence necessary to provide for the reception of the inconvenient guests which chance had thrust upon him. Mlle. de Verneuil, who was trying to warm her feet at the fire, had allowed Montauran to leave her, without turning her head; and thus disappointed the expectations of the onlookers, who all were anxious to see her face. Francine was the sole witness of the change wrought among those assembled by the young chief's departure. The gentlemen gathered round the stranger lady, and during the murmured conversation which was carried on among them, there was no one present who did not look again and again at the two strangers.

"You know Montauran!" she said. "He fell in love with this girl at first sight, and you can easily understand that the soundest advice was suspicious to him when it came from my mouth. Our friends in Paris, and Messieurs de Valois and d'Esgrignon at Alençon, one and all warned him of the trap they want to set for him, by flinging some hussy at his head, and he is bewitched with the first one he comes across; a girl who, if all I can learn about her is correct, has taken a noble name, only to tarnish it, who——" and so on, and so on.

This lady, in whom the woman that decided the attack on the turgotine can be recognized, will keep throughout

this story the name which enabled her to escape in the perils of her journey through Alençon. The publication of her real name could only displease a noble family, who have suffered deeply already from the errors of this young person, whose fortunes have, moreover, been taken for the subject of another drama.

Very soon the attitude of the company changed, and simple curiosity grew to be impertinent, and almost hostile. Two or three rather harsh epithets reached Francine's ears, who spoke a word to her mistress, and took refuge in the embrasure of a window. Marie rose, and turned her glances filled with dignity, and even with scorn, upon the insolent group. Her beauty, and her pride and the refinement of her manner, worked a sudden change in the attitude of her enemies, and called forth an involuntary flattering murmur from them. Two or three men among them, whose exterior polish and habits of gallantry revealed that they had been acquired in the lofty spheres of courts, came up to Marie in a free and easy manner; her modest reserve compelled their respect, none of them dared to address a word to her, and, so far from being accused by them, it was she who seemed to sit in judgment upon them.

The chiefs in this war undertaken for God and the King bore very little resemblance to the fancy portraits which she had been pleased to draw of them. The real grandeur of the struggle was diminished for her; it shrank into mean dimensions when she saw (two or three energetic faces excepted) the country gentlemen about her, every one of them entirely devoid of character and vigor. Marie came down all at once from poetry to prose. At first sight these faces seemed to manifest a craving for intrigue rather than a love of glory; it was really self-interest that had set each man's hand to his sword; so if they grew heroic figures in the field, here they appeared as they actually were. The loss of her illusions made Mlle. de Verneuil unjust, and prevented her from recognizing the real devotion that distinguished several of these men. But most of them, for all that, were of a

commonplace turn. If a few faces among them were marked out by a character of their own, it was spoiled by a certain pettiness due to aristocratic etiquette and convention. So if Marie's generosity allowed them to be astute and shrewd, she found no trace among them of the simpler and larger way of looking at things, which the men and the successes of the Republic had always led her to expect.

This nocturnal confabulation in the old ruined stronghold, beneath the quaintly-carved beams that were no ill match for the faces below, made her smile; she was inclined to see it all as a typical presentment of the monarchy. Then she thought with delight that at any rate the Marquis took the first place among these men, whose sole merit in her eyes lay in their devotion to a lost cause. She drew the outlines of her lover's face upon that background of figures, and pleased herself with the way in which he stood out against it; all these meagre and thin personalities were but tools in his hands, wherewith to carry out his own noble purposes.

Just then the returning footsteps of the Marquis sounded from the next room; the conspirators broke up into knots at once, and there was an end to the whisperings. They looked like school-boys who have been up to some mischief in their master's absence, hurriedly restoring an appearance of order and silence. Montauran came in. The happiness of admiring him, of seeing him take the first place among these folk, the youngest and handsomest man among them, fell to Marie. He went from group to group, like a king among his courtiers, distributing slight nods, handshakes, glances, and words that indicated a good understanding or a tinge of reproach; playing his part as a partisan leader with a grace and self-possession which could hardly have been looked for in a young man whom she had set down at first as a feather-brain. The presence of the Marquis had put a stop to their inquisitive demonstrations with regard to Mlle. de Verneuil, but Mme. du Gua's spitefulness soon showed its effects. The Baron du Guénic, nicknamed *l'Intimé*, who, among all these men thus brought together by weighty considerations, seemed

best entitled by his name and rank to speak on familiar terms with Montauran, laid a hand on his arm, and drew him into a corner.

"Listen, my dear Marquis," he said; "we are all sorry to see you about to commit a flagrant piece of folly."

"What do you mean by that remark?"

"Who can tell where this girl comes from, what she really is, and what her designs upon you may be?"

"Between ourselves, my dear l'Intimé, my fancy will have passed off by to-morrow morning."

"Just so; but how if the gipsy betrays you before the morning——?"

"I will answer you that when you tell me why she has not already done so," answered Montauran jestingly, assuming an air of exceeding self-complacency.

"If she has taken a liking to you, she would have no mind perhaps to betray you till her 'fancy' too had 'passed off.' . . ."

"Just take a look at that charming girl, my dear fellow; notice her manners, and dare to tell me that she is not a woman of good birth! If she sent a favorable glance in your direction, would you not feel, in the depths of you, some sort of respect for her? A certain lady has prejudiced you against her, but after what we have just said to each other, if she was one of those abandoned women that our friends have spoken about, I would kill her."

"You do not suppose that Fouché would be fool enough to pick up a girl from a street corner to send after you?" Mme. du Gua broke in. "He has sent some one likely to attract a man of your calibre. But if you are blind, your friends will have their eyes open to watch over you."

"Madame," answered the Gars, darting angry glances at her, "take care to make no attempt against this person or her escort, or nothing shall save you from my vengeance. It is my wish that mademoiselle should be treated with the greatest respect, and as a woman who is under my protection. We are connected, I believe, with the family of Verneuil."

The opposition which the Marquis encountered produced the effects that hindrances of this sort usually cause in young people. Lightly as he apparently held Mlle. de Verneuil when he gave the impression that his infatuation for her was only a whim, his feeling of personal pride had forced him to take a considerable step. By openly acknowledging her, it became a question of his own honor to make others respect her, so he went from group to group assuring every one that the stranger really was Mlle. de Verneuil, with the air of a man whom it would be dangerous to contradict; and all the murmurs were silenced.

As soon as harmony was in some sort re-established in the salon, and his duties as host detained him no longer, Montauran went eagerly up to his mistress, and said in a low voice, "Those people yonder have robbed me of a moment of happiness."

"I am very glad to have you beside me," she answered, smiling. "I give you fair warning; I am inquisitive, so do not grow tired of my questions too soon. First of all, tell me who that worthy person is in the green waistcoat."

"He is the celebrated Major Brigaut from the Marais, a comrade of the late Mercier's, otherwise called La Vendée."

"And who is the stout churchman with the florid countenance, with whom he is now discussing me?" went on Mlle. de Verneuil.

"Do you want to know what they are saying about you?"

"Do I want to know? . . . .Can you doubt it?"

"But I could not tell you without insulting you."

"The moment that you allow me to be insulted without wreaking vengeance for any affront put upon me in your house, I bid you farewell, Marquis. Not a moment longer will I stay. I have felt some pangs of conscience already at deceiving those poor trusting and trusty Republicans." She took several paces, but the Marquis went after her.

"My dear Marie, hear me. Upon my honor, I have silenced their scandalous talk before I know whether it is false or true. But our friends among the ministers in Paris have

sent warning to me to mistrust every sort of woman that comes in my way; telling me that Fouché has made up his mind to make use of some Judith out of the streets against me; and in my situation, it is very natural that my best friends should think that you are too handsome to be an honest woman——"

The Marquis looked straight into the depths of Mlle. de Verneuil's eyes; her color rose, she could not keep back the tears.

"Oh, I have deserved these insults," she cried. "I would fain see you convinced that I am a despicable creature, and yet know myself beloved—then I should doubt you no longer. I believed in you when you deceived me, but you have no belief in me when I am sincere. There, that is enough, sir!" she said, knitting her brows, and growing white, like a woman about to die. "Farewell." She fled into the dining-room with a desperate impulse.

"Marie, my life is yours," said the young Marquis in her ear. She stopped and looked at him.

"No, no," she said; "I will be generous. Farewell. When I followed you hither, I was mad; I was thinking neither of my own past nor of your future."

"What! you leave me at the moment when I lay my life at your feet——"

"It is offered in a moment of passion, of desire——"

"It is offered without regret and for ever," said he. She came back again, and to hide his emotion the Marquis resumed their conversation:

"That stout man whose name you asked for is a formidable person. He is the Abbé Gudin, one of those Jesuits who are obstinate enough, or, it may be, devoted enough, to stop in France in the teeth of the edict of 1793, which drove them into exile. He is the firebrand of war in these parts, and a propagandist of the religious confraternity named after the Sacred Heart. He makes use of religion as a means towards his ends, so he persuades his proselytes that they will come to life again, and he understands how to sustain their

fanaticism by dexterously contrived prophecy. You see how it is: one must seek to gain over every one through his private interests, in order to reach a great end. That is the whole secret of policy."

"And that muscular person in a vigorous old age, with such a repulsive face? There, look! the man who is wearing a ragged lawyer's gown."

"Lawyer! He aspires to the title of *maréchal de camp*. Have you never heard them speak of Longuy?"

"Is that he?" said Mlle. de Verneuil, startled. "And you make use of such men as he?"

"Hush! he might overhear you. Do you see that other man in unhallowed converse with Mme. du Gua?"

"The man in black who looks like a judge?"

"He is one of our diplomatists, La Billardière, the son of a counselor in the Parliament of Brittany; his name is Flamet, or something like it; but he is in the confidence of the princes."

"Then there is his neighbor, who is clutching his white clay pipe at this moment, and leaning the fingers of his right hand against the panel of the wainscot, like a boor?" said Mlle. de Verneuil, laughing.

"Pardieu! your guess about him is correct. He was formerly gamekeeper to that lady's husband, now deceased. He is in command of one of the companies, which I am opposing to the mobile battalions. He and Marche-à-Terre are perhaps the most scrupulously loyal servants that the King has hereabouts."

"But who is she?"

"She was Charette's last mistress," the Marquis replied. "She has a great influence over everybody here."

"Has she remained faithful to his memory?" All the answer vouchsafed by the Marquis was a dubious kind of compression of the lips.

"Have you a good opinion of her?"

"Really; you are very inquisitive!"

"She is my enemy because she can be my rival no longer,"

said Mlle. de Verneuil, laughing. "I forgive her her past errors, so let her forgive mine. Who is that officer with the moustaches?"

"Permit me to leave his name unmentioned. He is determined to rid us of the First Consul by attacking him sword in hand. Whether he succeeds or no, you will hear of him; he will become famous."

"And you are come hither to command such men as these?" she said aghast, "and these are the King's champions? Where are the great lords and gentlemen?"

"Why, they are scattered throughout every court in Europe!" said the Marquis scornfully. "Who but they are enlisting kings with their armies and their cabinets in the service of the House of Bourbon, to hurl them all upon this Republic, which is threatening monarchy and social order everywhere with utter destruction!"

"Ah!" she answered him, stirred by an enthusiastic impulse, "from this time forward be for me the pure source whence I shall draw all the rest of the ideas that I must learn; I am willing that it should be so. But leave me the thought that you are the one noble who does his duty in attacking France with Frenchmen and not with foreign auxiliaries. I am a woman, and I feel that if my own child were to strike me in anger, I could forgive him; but if he could see me torn in pieces by a stranger, I should consider him a monster."

"You will always be a Republican!" said the Marquis, overcome by a delightful intoxication; the strong feeling in her tones had strengthened his confident hopes.

"A Republican? No; I am that no longer. I should not respect you if you were to make your submission to the First Consul," she replied. "But neither should I be willing to see you at the head of the men who are plundering a corner of France, when they should be attacking the Republic in form. For whom are you fighting? What do you look for from a king restored to the throne by your hands? A woman once before achieved this glorious master-stroke, and the

king whom she delivered let them burn her alive. Such as he are the anointed of the Lord, and it is perilous to touch hallowed things. Leave it to God alone to set them up, to take them down, or to replace them on their dais among the purple. If you have weighed the reward that will be meted out to you, then in my eyes you are ten times greater than I have ever thought you. If that is so, trample me beneath your feet if you will; I would give you leave to do so, and be glad!"

"You are enchanting! But do not try to urge your doctrine on these gentlemen, or I shall be left without soldiers."

"Ah! if you would let me convert you, we would go a thousand leagues away from here."

"These men, whom you appear to despise, will know how to die in the struggle," said the Marquis in a more serious tone; "and all their faults will be forgotten then. Besides, if my efforts are crowned with any success, will not the laurels of victory hide everything?"

"You are the only one present who has anything to lose, as far as I can see."

"I am not the only one," he replied with real humility. "There are those two Vendean chiefs over there. The first one, whom you have heard spoken of as the Grande-Jacques, is the Comte de Fontaine, and the other La Billardière, whom I have already pointed out to you."

"Do you forget Quiberon, where La Billardière played a very strange part," she answered, struck by a sudden thought of the past.

"La Billardière has undertaken heavy responsibilities, believe me. Those who serve the princes do not lie upon roses."

"You make me shudder!" cried Marie; then she went on in a tone which indicated that she was keeping in the background some mystery that concerned him personally. "A single moment is enough for the destruction of an illusion, and to reveal secrets on which the lives and happiness of many men depend." She paused as if she were afraid of hav-

ing said too much, and added, "I should like to know that the soldiers of the Republic are in safety."

"I will be very careful," he said, smiling to conceal his agitation: "but say no more about your soldiers, I have answered for them to you on the faith of a gentleman."

"And, after all, what right had I to dictate to you?" she resumed. "You are to be the master always when it lies between us two. Did I not tell you that I should be in despair to reign over a slave?"

"My lord Marquis," said Major Brigaut respectfully, interrupting the conversation, "will the Blues remain here for some time?"

"They will go on again as soon as they are rested," Marie cried.

The Marquis sent searching glances round the company, observed the excitement among them, went from Mlle. de Verneuil, and left Mme. du Gua to take his place at her side. The young chief's sarcastic smile did not disturb the treacherous mask of good humor upon her features. Just as she came, Francine uttered a cry which she herself promptly stifled. Mlle. de Verneuil beheld with astonishment her faithful country-girl dash into the dining-room. She looked at Mme. du Gua, and her surprise increased when she saw the pallor that overspread the face of her enemy. Curious to learn the reason of this hasty flight, she turned towards the embrasure of the window, followed thither by her rival, who wished to lull any suspicions which an indiscretion might have awakened, and who smiled upon her with indescribable spitefulness as they returned together to the hearth after both had glanced over the landscape and the lake. Marie had seen nothing which justified Francine's departure, and Mme. du Gua was satisfied that she was being obeyed.

The lake, from the brink of which Marche-à-Terre had appeared in the courtyard when the lady called him forth, went to join the moat that surrounded and protected the gardens, forming winding stretches of water with mist above it,

sometimes as wide as a lake, sometimes as narrow as the ornamental streams contrived in parks. The steep sloping banks, past which the clear water was rippling, ran but a few fathoms distant from the windows. Francine had been engaged in musing on the black outlines of several old willow stumps against the surface of the water, and in noticing with indifferent eyes the uniform curve that a light breeze was giving to the willow branches. Suddenly, she thought she saw one of these shapes moving, on the mirror of the water, in the spontaneous and uneven fashion by which some living thing is revealed. The shape, howsoever dim it was, seemed to be that of a man.

At first Francine gave the credit of her vision to the broken outlines produced by the moonlight falling through the leaves; but very soon a second head appeared, and yet others showed themselves in the distance. The low shrubs along the bank swayed violently up and down, till Francine saw along the whole length of hedge a gradual motion like that of a huge Indian serpent of fabulous proportions. Here and there among the tufts of broom and the brambles points of light gleamed and danced. Redoubling her attention, Marche-à-Terre's sweetheart thought that she recognized the first of the black forms that moved along the quivering growth on the bank. However vague the outlines of the man, the beating of her heart convinced her that in him she saw Marche-à-Terre.

A gesture made it clear to her. Impatient to learn if some treachery or other were not lurking behind this mysterious proceeding, she rushed in the direction of the court. When she came into the middle of the green space, she looked from the two wings of the house to the banks on either side, without discerning any trace whatever of a furtive movement on the side which faced the inhabited wing. A faint rustling sound reached her; as she lent an attentive ear to it, it sounded like a noise made by some wild creature in the silence of the forests; she shuddered, but she did not tremble. Young and innocent as she yet was, her curiosity

swiftly prompted a stratagem. She saw the coach, and ran to crouch within it; only raising her head, with all the caution of a hare that has the sound of the far-off hunt ringing in her ears. She saw Pille-Miche come out of the stable. There were two peasants with the Chouan, and all three were carrying trusses of straw. These they spread out so as to form a long sort of shake-down in front of the inhabited pile of buildings that ran parallel with the embankment where the stunted trees were growing. The Chouans were still marching there with a noiselessness which revealed the fact that some horrible plot was being prepared.

"You are giving them straw as if they really were to sleep there. That's enough! Pille-Miche, that's enough!" muttered a hoarse voice which Francine recognized.

"And aren't they going to sleep there?" retorted Pille-Miche, with a stupid horse-laugh. "But are you not afraid that the Gars will be angry?" he went on in a voice so low that Francine caught nothing of it.

"Oh, well, he will be angry," Marche-à-Terre replied, in rather louder tones; "but all the same, we shall have killed the Blues. There is a carriage here," he went on; "we must put that away."

Pille-Miche drew the coach by the pole, and Marche-à-Terre gave such a vigorous push to one of the wheels, that Francine found herself inside the barn, and just about to be locked up in it, before she could think over her situation. Pille-Miche went to help to fetch the hogshead of cider which was to be served out to the soldiers of the escort by the orders of the Marquis. Marche-à-Terre walked the length of the coach on his way out to shut the door, when he felt a hand that stopped him by a clutch at the long hair of his goatskin. He recognized the eyes whose sweetness exercised a power over him like magnetism, and stood still for a moment as if spellbound. Francine sprang hastily out of the coach, and spoke in the aggressive tone that is so wonderfully becoming to a woman in vexation:

"Pierre, what news did you bring, as we came, to that lady

and her son? What are they doing here? Why are you hiding yourself? I want to know everything?"

Her words brought an expression into the Chouan's face which Francine had never yet known there. The Breton drew his innocent mistress to the threshold of the door; he turned her so that the white rays of the moonlight fell upon her, and made his answer, gazing at her the while with terrible eyes:

"Yes, by my damnation! Francine, I will tell you, but only when you have sworn to me on this rosary"—and he drew out a worn string of beads from under his goatskin—"swear upon this relic that you know," he went on, "to answer me truly one single question."

Francine blushed as she looked at the rosary; some lover's keepsake between them doubtless.

"It was on this," the Chouan went on, shaken with emotion, "that you swore——"

He did not finish, for the peasant-girl laid her hand on the lips of her wild lover to enjoin silence upon him.

"Is there any need for me to swear?" asked she.

He took his mistress gently by the hand, looked at her for a moment, and went on, "Is the young lady whom you serve really Mlle. de Verneuil?"

Francine stood motionless with her arms at her sides, with bowed head and drooping eyelids, pale and confused.

"She is a baggage!" Marche-à-Terre went on in a terrible voice.

The pretty hand tried once more to cover his lips at that word, but this time he recoiled from her in fury. The little Breton maid no longer saw her lover before her, but a wild beast in all his natural ferocity. His brows were drawn into a heavy scowl; his lips curled back in a snarl that showed his teeth; he looked like a dog defending his master.

"I left you a flower, and I find you garbage! Ah! why did I leave you? You are come here to betray us, to deliver up the Gars!"

These phrases were roared rather than articulated. Ter-

rified as Francine was, she dared to look this savage in the face at this last reproach, raised her eyes like an angel's to his, and answered quietly:

"That is false; I will stake my salvation on it. These are some of your lady's notions."

He lowered his head in his turn. She took his hand, came close to him caressingly, and said, "Pierre, why are we going on like this? Listen, I do not know if you yourself understand something of all this, for I can make nothing of it. But remember that this beautiful and noble young lady is my benefactress, and yours too—we live together almost like sisters. No harm of any sort ought to come to her so long as we are with her—not while we are both alive, at any rate. So swear to me that this shall be so, for you are the only person here whom I can trust."

"I am not the master here," the Chouan replied in a sullen tone. His face grew dark. She took his great hanging ears and gently twisted them as if she were caressing a cat.

"Well, then, promise me to use all the power you have to ensure the safety of our benefactress," she continued, seeing that he relented somewhat. He shook his head as if dubious of his success, a gesture that made the Breton girl shudder. The escort arrived on the causeway at this critical moment. The tramp of the men, and the clanking of their weapons, woke the echoes of the courtyard, and apparently put an end to Marche-à-Terre's hesitation.

"Perhaps I shall succeed in saving her," said he to his mistress, "if you can keep her in the house. And whatever may happen," he added, "stay there with her and keep the most absolute secrecy. Without that I will engage for nothing."

"I promise," she answered in her terror.

"Very well; go in. In with you at once! And let no one see that you are frightened—not even your mistress."

"Yes."

The Chouan looked at her in a fatherly way. She pressed his hand and fled with the swiftness of a bird towards the

flight of steps; while he slipped into the hedge he had left, like an actor who rushes to the wings as the curtain rises on a tragedy.

"Do you know, Merle, this place looks to me like a regular mouse-trap," said Gérard, as they reached the château.

"Yes, I see that perfectly well," the captain answered thoughtfully. Both officers hastened to post sentinels so as to secure the causeway and the gate; then they cast suspicious glances over the embankments and the lie of the land about them.

"Pshaw!" said Merle; "we must either frankly trust ourselves in these barracks, or keep out of them altogether."

"Let us go in," answered Gérard.

Released from duty by a word from their commander, the soldiers quickly stacked their guns in conical piles, and pitched their colors in front of the litter of straw, with the cask of cider standing in the centre of it. They broke up into groups, and a couple of peasants began to serve out rye-bread and butter to them. The Marquis came forward and took the two officers into the salon. As Gérard reached the top of the flight of steps, he took a look at the two wings of the house where the aged larches were spreading their black branches, and called Beau-Pied and Clef-des-Cœurs to him.

"Both of you go and reconnoitre the gardens and search the hedges. Do you understand? And then post a sentinel in front of your line of defence."

"May we light a fire before we set out on our prowl, adjutant?" said Clef-des-Cœurs.

Gérard nodded.

"You see it for yourself, Clef-des-Cœurs," said Beau-Pied; "the adjutant made a mistake in poking himself into this hornet's nest. If Hulot had been commanding us, he would never have run us into this corner; it is as if we were in the bottom of a pot here."

"What an ass you are!" exclaimed Clef-des-Cœurs. "You, the king of sharp fellows, can't guess that this sentry-box of a château belongs to the amiable individual for whom our

gay Merle, the most accomplished of captains, is tuning his pipe. He is going to marry her, that is as easy to see as a well-polished bayonet; and such a woman as that will be a credit to the demi-brigade."

"True," answered Beau-Pied, "and you might add that there is good cider here, but I can't drink it with any relish in front of those beastly hedges. I seem to see Larose and Vieux-Chapeau coming to grief in the ditch up yonder on La Pèlerine. I shall never forget poor old Larose's queue as long as I live; it bobbed up and down, like a knocker on a front door."

"Beau-Pied, my friend, you have too much imagination for a soldier. You ought to make poetry at the National Institute."

"If I have too much imagination," Beau-Pied answered, "you yourself have hardly any. It will be a good while before you come to be consul."

The laughter of the troop put an end to the dispute, as Clef-des-Cœurs found no answering shaft for his adversary in his quiver.

"Are you ready to make your round? I myself am going to take to the right," said Beau-Pied.

"All right; I will take the left," his comrade answered. "But hold on a moment! I want to drink a glass of cider; my throat is all glued together like the sticking-plaster that covered Hulot's best hat."

Unluckily, the perilous embankment, where Francine had seen the men moving, lay on the left-hand side of the gardens, which Clef-des-Cœurs was neglecting to beat up at once. War is altogether a game of chance.

As Gérard entered the salon and saluted the company, he gave a searching look round at the men of whom it was composed. His suspicions recurred to his mind in greater force. He went suddenly up to Mlle. de Verneuil and spoke to her in a low voice, "I think you ought to make a retreat at once; we are not safe here."

"Can you fear anything in my house?" she asked, laughing. "You are safer here than you would be in Mayenne."

A woman always answers unhesitatingly for her lover. The two officers were less uneasy; and just then, in spite of some unimportant remarks about an absent guest whose consequence was sufficient to keep them waiting for him, the company went into the dining-room. Thanks to the usual silence which prevails at the beginning of a meal, Mlle. de Verneuil could pay some attention to this meeting, so strange under the present circumstances. She herself had in a manner been the cause of it. It had come about through the ignorance which women who treat everything according to their own caprice are wont to bring to the most critical actions in life. One fact suddenly struck her with surprise. The two Republican officers towered above the others by the impressive character of their features. Their long hair was drawn away from the temples and gathered at the nape of the neck into a huge plaited tail, leaving the outlines of their foreheads clearly defined in a way that gives an appearance of sincerity and dignity to a young face. Their threadbare blue uniforms, with the worn red facings, their epaulettes flung behind their shoulders in many a march (plainly showing a lack of greatcoats throughout the army, even among the officers themselves); everything about them, in fact, brought out the strong contrast between these two military men and the others who surrounded them.

"Ah," she said to herself, "this is the Nation; this is Liberty!" Then she glanced round the Royalists,—"and *there* is the one man, a King and Privilege!" she said.

She could not help admiring Merle's face; the gallant soldier so completely resembled the typical French trooper, who can whistle an air as the bullets fall thick about him, and who cannot forego a gibe at a comrade who meets with an awkward accident. Gérard was impressive. In his sternness and self-possession he seemed to be one of those Republicans from conviction, who were to be met with in such numbers at this time in the French armies—an element of noble unobtrusive devotion, that lent to them an energy never known before.

"There is another of these men with a large outlook," said Mlle. de Verneuil to herself. "They are the masters of the present on which they take their stand; they are shattering the past, but it is for the benefit of the future."

The thought made her melancholy, because it had no bearing upon her lover. She turned towards him, that a different feeling of admiration might make reparation for her tribute to that Republic which she already began to hate. She saw the Marquis surrounded by men fanatical and daring enough, and sufficiently keen speculators to attack a triumphant Republic in the hope of reinstating a dead monarchy, a proscribed religion, princes errant, and defunct privileges. "His scope of action," she thought, "is no less than that of the other; he is groping among the ruins of a past out of which he seeks to make a future."

Her imagination, fancy-fed, hesitated between the new and the old ruins. Her conscience clamored in her, that the one was fighting for a man and the other for a country; but by means of sentiment she had arrived at the point which is reached by the way of reason, when it is recognized that the King is the same thing as the country.

The Marquis heard the sound of a man's footsteps in the salon, and rose to go to meet him. He recognized the belated guest, who tried to speak to him, in surprise at his company; but the Gars hid from the Republicans a sign by which he desired the stranger to take his place at the banquet and to keep silence. When the two Republican officers examined the features of their hosts, the suspicions at first entertained by them awoke afresh. Their prudence was aroused at the sight of the Abbé Gudin's ecclesiastical vestments and the outlandish costumes of the Chouans. Their heed redoubled; they discovered amusing contrasts between the talk and the manners of the guests. If some of them showed symptoms of ultra-Republicanism, the bearing of certain others was just as pronouncedly aristocratic. Certain glances exchanged between the Marquis and his guests, which they detected, certain ambiguous words incautiously dropped; and more

than either of these things, the round beards which adorned the throats of several guests who unsuccessfully tried to conceal them by their cravats, apprised the officers of the truth, which struck them both at the same moment.

They communicated the same thought to each other by the same glance, for Mme. du Gua had cleverly separated them, and they had to fall back upon the language of the eyes. The situation required that they should act adroitly. They did not know whether they were the masters of the château, or whether they had been snared in a trap; they had no idea whether Mlle. de Verneuil was a dupe or an accomplice in this inexplicable affair; but an unforeseen occurrence hurried matters to a crisis before they could fully recognize its gravity.

The newly-arrived guest was one of those men, squarely built in every way, with a high-colored complexion, who fling their shoulders back as they walk, who seem to make a flutter in the atmosphere round about them, and to be of the opinion that every one needs must take more than one look at them. In spite of his noble birth, he had taken life as a joke which must be made the best of; and though he had a devout veneration for himself, he was good-natured, well-mannered, and witty, after the manner of those gentlemen who, having finished their education at court, have retired to their estates; whereon, even after the lapse of twenty years, they will never believe that they have grown rusty. Men of this description say and do the wrong thing with assured self-possession; they talk rubbish in a lively way, show no little skill in fighting shy of good fortune, and take incredible pains to run their heads into nooses. He made up for lost time by plying his knife and fork in a way which showed him to be a stout trencherman, and then gave a look round at the company. At the sight of the two officers his surprise was redoubled; he directed a questioning look at Mme. du Gua, who only replied by indicating Mlle. de Verneuil. When he set eyes on the siren whose beauty was beginning to lay to rest the thoughts which Mme. du Gua

had at first aroused in the minds of the guests, one of those insolent and derisive smiles that seem to convey a whole scandalous chronicle broke over the countenance of the stout stranger. He bent and whispered to his neighbor two or three words that remained a mystery for Marie and the officers, as they traveled from ear to ear and from mouth to mouth, till they reached the heart of him into whom they must strike death.

The Vendean and Chouan chiefs turned their scrutiny upon the Marquis of Montauran with merciless curiosity. Mme. du Gua's eyes were radiant with joy as they traveled from the Marquis to the astonished Mlle. de Verneuil. The anxious officers seemed to consult each other as they awaited the upshot of this extraordinary scene. Then in a moment the knives and forks in all hands ceased to move, silence prevailed in the place, and all eyes were concentrated upon the Gars. A terrific burst of fury had turned the flushed and passionate face to the hue of wax. The young chief turned towards the guest who had set this squib in motion, and said in a deep smothered voice:

"*Death of my soul!* Count, is that true?" he demanded.

"On my honor," the count answered, bowing gravely. The Marquis lowered his eyes for one moment; but he raised them immediately to turn them once more upon Marie. She was watching this struggle closely, and received that deadly glance.

"I would give my life," he muttered, "to have my revenge at this moment."

Mme. du Gua understood these words from the mere movement of his lips, and smiled at the young man, as one smiles at a friend who is about to be delivered from his despair. The general scorn depicted upon all faces for Mlle. de Verneuil raised the indignation of the two Republicans to the highest pitch. They rose abruptly.

"What do you desire, citizens?" asked Mme. du Gua.

"Our swords, citoyenne!" Gérard replied, ironically.

"You do not require them at table," said the Marquis coolly.

"No, but we are going to play at a game that you understand," said Gérard as he reappeared. "We shall see each other a little closer here than we did at La Pèlerine."

The company remained struck dumb. The courtyard rang at that moment with a volley, fired all at once and in a way that sounded terribly in the ears of the two officers. They both rushed to the flight of steps, and saw about a hundred Chouans taking aim at the few soldiers who had survived the first round of firing, and shooting them down like hares. These Bretons were coming up from the bank where Marche-à-Terre had stationed them at the risk of their lives; for during these manœuvres, and after the last shots were fired, a sound was heard through the cries of dying men. Several Chouans had dropped like stones into the depths of the water which eddied round about them. Pille-Miche took aim at Gérard; Marche-à-Terre covered Merle.

"Captain," the Marquis said coolly, repeating to Merle the words that the Republican had spoken about him, "you see that *men are like medlars; they ripen on straw.*" He waved his hand to show the captain the whole escort of Blues lying on the blood-drenched litter, where the Chouans were despatching the living and stripping the dead with incredible rapidity. "I was quite right when I told you that your men would never reach La Pèlerine," added the Marquis, "and I think that your skull will be filled with lead before mine is. What do you say?"

Montauran felt a hideous craving to slake his anger. His own taunts of the vanquished, the cold-blooded cruelty, the very treachery of this military execution, carried out without his orders, but to which he now gave his countenance, satisfied the inmost wishes of his heart. In his wrath he would fain have destroyed all France. The mangled Blues and their surviving officers, all of them guiltless of the crime for which he demanded vengeance, were in his hands like so many cards, which the gambler gnaws to pieces in his despair.

"I would rather perish in the same way than gloat over it

as you do," said Gérard. He looked at the naked blood-stained corpses of his men. "Murdered!" he cried, "and after this cowardly fashion!"

"Like Louis XVI., sir!" the Marquis retorted sharply.

"There are mysteries in the trial of a King which you, sir, will never comprehend," said Gérard haughtily.

"Bring a King to trial!" cried the Marquis, now beside himself.

"Wage war against France!" said Gérard contemptuously.

"Preposterous folly!" said the Marquis.

"Parricide!" the Republican retorted.

"Regicide!"

"What, are you going to pick a quarrel in the last minute of your life?" cried Merle gaily.

"True," said Gérard coldly. Then turning to the Marquis, "Sir," he said, "if you mean to put us to death, at least do us the favor to shoot us at once."

"Just like you!" the captain put in; "always in a hurry to be done with a thing. But when one sets out on a long journey, my friend, and there is to be no breakfast the next morning, one has supper first."

Proudly, and without a word, Gérard sprang towards the wall; Pille-Miche leveled his musket at him, and glanced at the impassive Marquis. He construed the silence of his chief as a command, and the adjutant-major fell like a tree. Marche-à-Terre rushed up to share this fresh spoil with Pille-Miche, and they wrangled and croaked above the yet warm corpse like two famished ravens.

"If you like to finish your supper, captain, you are at liberty to come with me," said the Marquis, who wished to keep Merle for an exchange of prisoners. The captain went back with the Marquis mechanically, murmuring in a low voice, as if he were reproaching himself, "It is that she-devil of a light-of-love who is at the bottom of all this—— What will Hulot say?"

"Light-of-love!" exclaimed the Marquis in a smothered voice; "then there is no doubt about what she really is!"

The captain had apparently dealt a deathblow to Montauran, who followed him pale, haggard, exhausted, and with tottering steps. Another scene had been enacted in the dining-room, which in the absence of the Marquis had taken so menacing a turn, that Marie, who found herself deprived of her protector, could read her death-warrant written of a certainty in her rival's eyes. At the sound of the volley every one except Mme. du Gua had risen from the table. "Take your seats again," said she; "it is nothing. Our people are killing the Blues."

When she saw that the Marquis was well out of the room, she rose. "Mademoiselle, here," she said, with the calmness of suppressed rage, "came to carry off the Gars from us. She came here to try to give him up to the Republic."

"I could have given him up a score of times since this morning," replied Mlle. de Verneuil, "and I have saved his life."

Mme. du Gua sprang at her rival with lightning swiftness. In a transport of blind fury, she rent the feeble loops of twisted braid that fastened the spencer of the girl (who stood aghast at this unlooked-for assault), and with violent hands broke into the sanctuary where the letter lay concealed, tearing her way through the material, the embroideries, corset and shift. Then she took advantage of this search to assuage her personal jealousy, and managed to lacerate her rival's throbbing breast with such dexterity and fury, that her nails left their traces in the blood that they had drawn, feeling the while a horrid pleasure in subjecting her victim to this detestable outrage. In the faint resistance which Marie offered to this furious woman, her unfastened hood fell back; her hair, released from restraint, shook itself free in waving curls; modesty had set her whole face aflame; two burning tears fell, that left their gleaming traces on her cheeks and made the fire in her eyes glow brighter; she stood quivering at the indignity, shuddering under the eyes of those assembled. Even harsh judges would have believed in her innocence when they saw what she suffered.

Hatred is so clumsy a calculator that Mme. du Gua did not perceive that no one gave any heed whatever to her when she cried triumphantly, "Look here, gentlemen; have I traduced this frightful creature now?"

"Not so very frightful," said the stout guest, who had brought about this disaster. "I have a prodigious liking for frights of this description."

"Here is an order," said the merciless Vendean lady, "signed by Laplace, and countersigned by Dubois." Several raised their heads at the two names. "And this is the gist of it," Mme. du Gua continued:

"Military citizen-commandants of every rank, local administrators, procureur-syndics, and so forth, in the revolted departments, and especially those situated in the localities frequented by the ci-devant Marquis de Montauran, chief of the bandits, and nicknamed the Gars, are to give every help and assistance to the citoyenne Marie Verneuil, and to act in accordance with the orders which she may give them, each one, in everything that concerns him, and so on, and so on."

"Here is an Opera girl taking an illustrious name to soil it with this infamy," she added.

There was an evident stir of surprise among those assembled.

"The contest is not on equal terms if the Republic is going to employ such pretty women against us!" said the Baron du Guénic gaily.

"And women, moreover, who have nothing to lose," returned Mme. du Gua.

"Nothing?" said the Chevalier du Vissard; "mademoiselle has endowments which must bring her in a pretty large income!"

"The Republic must be of a very frivolous turn to send us women of pleasure as envoys," cried the Abbé Gudin.

"But, unfortunately, mademoiselle seeks those pleasures which kill," said Mme. du Gua, with a hideous glee in her expression, which meant that the end to this jesting was approaching.

"How is it then that you are living still, madame?" said Marie, rising to her feet after repairing the disorder in her dress. The cutting epigram silenced the company, and compelled their respect for so proud a victim. Mme. du Gua noticed a smile stealing over the lips of the chiefs; the irony in it infuriated her; she neither saw the entrance of the Marquis nor of the captain, who followed him.

"Pille-Miche," she called to the Chouan, as she pointed out Mlle. de Verneuil, "here is my share of the spoil; I make her over to you; do whatever you will with her."

A shudder ran through the whole roomful at the words "whatever you will," in that woman's mouth; for behind the Marquis there appeared the hideous heads of Marche-à-Terre and Pille-Miche, and her fate was evident in all its horror.

Francine stood as if thunderstruck, with clasped hands and eyes brimming with tears. Mlle. de Verneuil, who recovered all her self-possession in the face of danger, cast a look of scorn round the assembly, snatched her letter back from Mme. du Gua, and held up her head; her eyes were dry, but there was lightning in them as she hastened towards the door, where Merle's sword was standing. There she came upon the Marquis, who stood apathetic and motionless as a statue. There was no trace of pity for her in his face; every feature was rigid and immovable. Cut to the heart, her life grew hateful to her. This man then, who had professed so much love for her, had listened to the taunts that had been heaped upon her; had stood there, a frozen-hearted spectator of the outrage she had just suffered when the beauties that a woman reserves for love had been subjected to the general gaze. Perhaps she might have forgiven Montauran for the scorn with which he regarded her, but it made her indignant that he should have seen her in an ignominious position. The dazed look she turned upon him was full of hate, for she felt a dreadful craving for revenge awaking within her. She saw death now close upon her, and felt oppressed by her own powerlessness.

Something surged up in her head like an eddying tide of

madness. For her, with the boiling blood in her veins, the whole world seemed wrapped in flames. Instead of killing herself therefore, she snatched up the sword, brandished it above the Marquis, and drove it at him up to the hilt; but as the blade had slipped between his side and his arm, the Gars caught Marie by the wrist and dragged her from the room, aided by Pille-Miche, who had flung himself upon the frenzied girl just as she tried to kill the Marquis. At the sight of all this, Francine shrieked.

"Pierre! Pierre! Pierre!" she cried in piteous tones, following her mistress as she wailed.

The Marquis left the stupefied assembly and went out, shutting the door of the room behind him. He was still holding the girl's wrist tightly in a convulsive clutch when he reached the flight of steps; and though Pille-Miche's nervous hands were almost crushing the bone of her arm, she was conscious of nothing but the burning fingers of the young chief, at whom she gazed with her cold eyes.

"You are hurting me, sir!" The Marquis looked at his mistress for an instant, and this was all the answer that he made.

"Have you something to avenge as foully as that woman has done?" said she. Then she shivered as she saw the corpses stretched out upon the litter, and she cried, "The faith of a gentleman. . . . Ha! ha! ha!" Her laughter was fearful to hear. "A glorious day!" she added.

"Yes," he echoed, "a glorious day, and without a morrow."

He dropped Mlle. de Verneuil's hand when he had given one long, last look at the magnificent creature whom he found it all but impossible to renounce. Neither of these two highly wrought spirits would give way. Perhaps the Marquis was waiting for a tear, but the girl's eyes were dry and proud. He turned away abruptly, and left Pille-Miche his victim.

"God will hear me, Marquis; I shall pray to Him to give you a glorious day without a morrow!"

Pille-Miche, rather at a loss with so splendid a prey, drew her along with a mixture of respect and mockery in his gentleness. The Marquis heaved a sigh, and returned to the dining-room, turning upon his guests a face like that of a corpse with the eyes as yet unclosed.

Captain Merle's presence was inexplicable for every actor in this tragedy; every one looked at him questioningly and in surprise. Merle perceived their astonishment, and, smiling sadly, he spoke, still in character, to the Chouans.

"I do not believe, gentlemen, that you can refuse a glass of wine to a man who is about to go the last stage of his journey."

It was just as the assemblage had been restored to equanimity by these words, uttered with a Gallic light-heartedness which was bound to find favor with Vendeans, that Montauran reappeared; his white face and the fixed look in his eyes struck a chill through every guest.

"You shall see," said the captain, "that dead men will set the living going!"

"Ah!" said the Marquis, with the involuntary start of a man who wakes from sleep; "there you are, my dear Council-of-War!" He reached for a bottle of *vin de Grave* as if to fill the other's glass.

"Thanks, citizen-marquis; but, you see, it might go to my head."

At this witticism, Mme. du Gua spoke smilingly to the guests.

"Come," she said; "let us spare him the dessert."

"You are very cruel, madame, in your vengeance," the captain answered. "You forget that murdered friend of mine, who is waiting for me; and I always keep my appointments."

"Captain," said the Marquis, "you are at liberty! Stay," and he threw his glove towards him; "here is your passport. The *Chasseurs du Roi* know that they must not kill all the game at once."

"Life!" said Merle, "very well, so be it then; but you are

making a blunder. You shall be closely pressed, I will engage for it, and I shall give you no quarter. You may be very clever, but you are not worth as much as Gérard. Still, although your head will never make up to me for his, have it I must and will."

"He was in such a great hurry!" retorted the Marquis.

"Good-bye. Perhaps I could drink with my own executioners, but I cannot stay here with my friend's murderers," said the captain, and he vanished, leaving the guests to their amazement.

"Now, then, gentlemen, what have you to say about the sheriffs, apothecaries, and attorneys who rule the Republic?" asked the Marquis coolly.

"God's death, Marquis!" replied the Comte de Bauvan; "they are very ill-bred, at all events. That fellow has affronted us, it seems to me."

There had been a secret motive for the captain's prompt retreat. This girl, who had met with such scorn and humiliation, and who perhaps succumbed at that very moment, had, during the past scene, shown him beauties so difficult to forget that as he went out he said to himself, "If she does belong to that class, she is no ordinary girl at any rate, and she shall assuredly be my wife——"

He despaired so little of rescuing her from the clutches of these savages, that his first thought had been how he would take her under his protection in the future, having saved her life. Unfortunately, when the captain reached the flight of steps, he found the courtyard deserted. He looked about him and gave ear to the silence, but heard nothing except the noisy far-off laughter of the Chouans as they drank and divided the booty in the gardens. He ventured to turn the corner of the fatal wing of the building, where his men had been shot down; and by the feeble light of one or two candles, he distingished, from his angle, the *Chasseurs du Roi* broken up into different groups. Neither Pille-Miche, nor Marche-à-Terre, nor the girl herself was there; but he suddenly felt a pull at the skirt of his

uniform, and turning round, he saw Francine on her knees.

"Where is she?" he asked.

"I do not know. . . . Pierre drove me away, and ordered me not to stir."

"Which way did they go?"

"That way," she answered, pointing to the causeway. Then, in the moonlight, the captain and Francine discerned certain shadows falling on the waters of the lake; the slender feminine form that they both recognized, indistinct as it was, made their hearts beat.

"Oh, it is she!" said the Breton maid. Mlle. de Verneuil was apparently standing there resignedly, with several figures about her whose actions indicated a discussion.

"There are several of them!" the captain exclaimed. "It is all one; come along."

"You will lose your life to no purpose," said Francine.

"I have lost it once already to-day," he answered gaily. Both of them made their way towards the gloomy gateway, on the other side of which this scene was taking place. But Francine stopped half-way.

"No," she called softly; "I will go no further! Pierre told me not to meddle. I know him. We shall spoil everything. Do anything you please, *Monsieur l'Officier,* but keep away. If Pierre were to see you with me, he would kill you."

Pille-Miche appeared without the gate; he called to the postilion who had kept in the stable, saw the captain, and shouted as he leveled his musket at him, "Saint Anne of Auray! The *recteur* at Antrain was quite right when he told us that the Blues had signed a contract with the devil. Stop a bit; I will show you how to come to life again!"

"Hollo, there! My life has been granted to me," shouted Merle, seeing himself threatened.

"Here is your chief's glove!"

"Yes," answered the Chouan, "just like a ghost, that! I, on the other hand, do not grant you your life. . . . *Ave Maria!*" and he fired. The shot penetrated the captain's

head, he dropped; and as Francine came up to him she distinctly heard Merle uttering these words, "I would rather stop here with them than go back without them."

The Chouan rushed upon the Blue to strip the body with the remark, "There is one good thing about these men who come back, their clothes come to life again along with them"; but when he saw in the captain's hand the glove of the Gars that had been held up for him, he stood in dismay at sight of that sacred token. "I would not be in the skin of my mother's son!" he exclaimed, and he vanished with the swiftness of a bird.

In order to understand this unexpected meeting, so fatal for the captain, it is necessary to follow the fortunes of Mlle. de Verneuil after the Marquis, overcome with his rage and despair, had gone away and abandoned her to Pille-Miche. Then Francine had seized Marche-à-Terre's arm in a spasm of fear, and with her eyes full of tears had reminded him of the promise he had made to her. At the distance of a few paces Pille-Miche was dragging off his victim, much as he might have trailed some awkward burden after him. Marie, with loosened hair and bowed head, turned her eyes upon the lake, but she was held back by an iron grip, and compelled to follow the Chouan with lagging steps; now and again he turned to give her a look or to hasten her progress, and each time he did so a jovial thought was expressed on his face by a frightful smile.

"Isn't she grand! . . ." he cried with uncouth emphasis. Francine, hearing these words, recovered her power of speech.

"Pierre!"

"Well?"

"Is he going to kill mademoiselle?"

"Not just at once," answered Marche-à-Terre.

"But she will resist; and if she dies, I shall die too!"

"Ah, well; you are too fond of her; . . . so let her die!" said Marche-à-Terre.

"If we two are rich and happy, we owe our good fortune

to her; but, anyhow, have you not promised me to save her from all misfortune?"

"I will try; but stop there, and don't stir away."

Marche-à-Terre's arm was instantly released, and Francine, consumed by the most terrible anxiety, waited in the courtyard. Marche-à-Terre came up with his companion just as the latter had entered the barn and forced his victim to get into the coach. Pille-Miche demanded his fellow's aid to pull the coach out.

"What do you want with all this?" inquired Marche-à-Terre.

"Well, the Grande-Garce has given me the woman, so all she has belongs to me."

"As for the coach, well and good, you will make some money out of it; but how about the woman? She will fly at your face like a cat!"

Pille-Miche burst into a noisy laugh, and replied, *"Quien,* I shall take her home along with me, and I shall tie her up."

"All right; let us put the horses in," said Marche-à-Terre.

A moment later Marche-à-Terre, who had left his companion to keep watch over his victim, brought the carriage out upon the causeway outside the gate. Pille-Miche got in beside Mlle. de Verneuil, without noticing the start she made to fling herself into the water.

"Hollo! Pille-Miche!" shouted Marche-à-Terre.

"What is it?"

"I will buy your share of the plunder of you."

"Are you joking?" asked the Chouan, pulling his prisoner by the skirt as a butcher might seize a calf that was escaping him.

"Let me have a look at her, and I'll make you an offer."

The unhappy girl was obliged to descend, and to stand there between the two Chouans, who each held one of her hands in his grasp, and gazed at her as the two elders must have stared at the bathing Susannah. Marche-à-Terre heaved a sigh.

"Will you take thirty good livres a year?"

"Do you really mean it?"

"Do you take it?" asked Marche-à-Terre, stretching out his hand.

"Oh, it is a bargain, for I can have Breton girls with that, and grand ones too! But how about the carriage; who is to have that?" said Pille-Miche, bethinking himself.

"That is mine!" cried Marche-à-Terre, with a ring in his terrible voice which indicated a kind of ascendency over all his companions due to the savagery of his nature.

"But suppose there should be money in the carriage?"

"Haven't you struck a bargain?"

"Yes; I closed with you."

"All right; go and look up the postilion, who is fixed up in the stable."

"But if there was any gold in it——"

"Is there any in there?" Marche-à-Terre asked sharply of Marie, while he shook her by the arm.

"I have a hundred crowns," replied Mlle. de Verneuil. At these words the two Chouans looked at each other.

"Well, my good friend, do not let us fall out about a Republican girl," said Pille-Miche in Marche-à-Terre's ear; "shall we chuck her into the pond with a stone round her neck, and divide the hundred crowns between us?"

"I will give you the hundred crowns out of my share of d'Orgemont's ransom!" cried Marche-à-Terre, suppressing the groan occasioned by this sacrifice.

Pille-Miche gave a hoarse kind of cry, and went to find the postilion. His glee brought bad luck to the captain whom he met. When he heard the report of the gun, Marche-à-Terre hurried to the spot, where Francine, still in terror, was praying with clasped hands upon her knees beside the poor captain, so vivid had been the effect upon her of the spectacle of the murder.

"Run to your mistress," said the Chouan shortly; "she is safe." He himself ran in search of the postilion, and returned with the speed of lightning. As he passed by Merle's body for the second time, he saw the glove of the Gars, which the dead hand was still clutching convulsively.

"Oh, ho!" cried he; "Pille-Miche has tried foul play here! It is not so sure that he will live to draw that income of his——"

He tore away the glove, and said to Mlle. de Verneuil, who was already in her place in the coach with Francine beside her, "Here; take this glove. If you are attacked on the road say, 'Oh! the Gars!' and show this passport here, and no harm can come to you. Francine," he said, turning towards her and seizing her hand, "we are quits now with the woman there; the devil take her; come with me."

"Would you have me leave her just now at this moment!" Francine answered in a melancholy voice. Marche-à-Terre first scratched his ear and then his forehead. Then he raised his head and showed his eyes, with the fierce expression that made them formidable.

"You are right," said he. "For a week I will leave you with her; but when once it is over, if you do not come to me——" He did not finish the sentence, but he struck the muzzle of his rifle a heavy blow with the flat of his hand, made a feint of leveling it at his mistress, and went without waiting for a response.

As soon as the Chouan had gone, a stifled voice that seemed to rise from the surface of the pond cried, "Madame! . . . Madame! . . ."

The postilion and the two women shuddered with horror, for several dead bodies had drifted thither. A Blue hiding behind a tree showed himself. "Let me get up on your box, or I am a dead man! That damned glass of cider that Clef-des-Cœurs would drink has cost more than a pint of blood! If he had followed my example, and made his rounds, our poor comrades would not be floating about there, like a fleet."

While these events were taking place without the house, the chiefs sent by the Vendeans were conferring with the Chouans, glass in hand, while the Marquis of Montauran presided. Ample potations of Bordeaux wine gave warmth to the debate, which grew momentous and serious as the ban-

quet drew to a close. During the dessert, when the lines of concerted military action had been laid down, and the Royalists drank to the health of the Bourbons, the report of Pille-Miche's gun sounded like an echo of the ill-omened war which these gay and noble conspirators were fain to wage against the Republic. Mme. du Gua shook with the pleasurable agitation which she felt at being rid of her rival, and at this the guests all looked at one another, and the Marquis rose from the table and went out.

"After all, he was in love with her," said Mme. du Gua satirically; "go and keep him company, M. de Fontaine; he will grow as tiresome as the flies if he gets into the blues."

She went to the window which looked out upon the courtyard, to try to see Marie's dead body. Thence, by the last light of the setting moon, she could make out the coach which was ascending the avenue between the apple trees with incredible speed. Mlle. de Verneuil's veil was fluttering in the breeze out of the coach-window. Mme. du Gua left the company, enraged at what she saw.

The Marquis was lounging on the flight of steps, deep in gloomy thoughts, as he watched about a hundred and fifty Chouans who had returned from the gardens, whither they had gone to divide their booty, and who were now about to finish the cider and the bread which had been promised to the Blues. These soldiers (new pattern) upon whom the hopes of the Monarchy were founded were drinking together in little knots; while seven or eight of their number were amusing themselves on the embankment opposite to the flight of steps, by tying stones to the bodies of the Blues and flinging them into the water. This spectacle, taken in connection with the various pictures presented by the eccentric costumes and the wild faces of the callous and uncivilized *gars,* was so extraordinary and so novel to M. de Fontaine (who had observed a certain appearance of seemliness and discipline among the Vendean troops), that he seized this opportunity to say to the Marquis of Montauran, "What can you hope to do with such brutes as that?"

"No great things, you mean, my dear Count!" replied the Gars.

"Will they ever be able to execute manœuvres when they are confronted with the Republicans?"

"Never."

"Will they ever be able to do so much as to understand your orders and carry them out?"

"Never."

"Then what use will they be to you?"

"They will enable me to plunge my sword into the heart of the Republic," thundered the Marquis; "to make Fougères mine in three days, and the length and breadth of Brittany in ten! . . . Come, sir," he continued in a milder voice, "set out for la Vendée; let Autichamp, Suzannet, and the Abbé Bernier only go ahead as quickly as I shall; let them not open negotiations with the First Consul (as they once led me to fear)"—here he gave the Vendean's hand a mighty grasp—"and we shall be within thirty leagues of Paris in three weeks."

"But the Republic is sending sixty thousand men and General Brune against us!"

"Sixty thousand men! Really?" cried the Marquis, with a satirical smile. "And with what men will Bonaparte carry on his Italian campaign? And as for General Brune, he will not come either. Bonaparte has dispatched him against the English in Holland, and General Hédouville, the friend of our friend Barras, will take his place out here. Now do you understand me?"

When he heard him talk in this way, M. de Fontaine looked at the Marquis with an astute and arch expression which seemed to convey a reproach to the speaker for not fully understanding the drift of the mysterious words which he had just uttered. Both gentlemen understood each other perfectly well from that moment, yet the young chief replied with an indefinable smile to the unspoken thought in the eyes of both.

"M. de Fontaine, do you know my arms? My device is —*'Persévérer jusqu' à la mort.'*"

The Comte de Fontaine grasped Montauran's hand and pressed it as he said, "I was left for dead on the field at Quatre-Chemins, so you will have no misgivings about me; but believe my experience—times are changed."

"Oh! yes," said la Billardière, who joined them. "You are young, Marquis. Just listen to me. Your estates have not all been sold——"

"Ah! can you imagine devotion without a sacrifice!" said Montauran.

"Do you really know the King?" said la Billardière.

"Yes."

"Then I admire you."

"The King," said the young chief, "is the Priest, and I am fighting for the faith."

And so they separated. The Vendean, convinced of the necessity of a resignation to the course of events, and of keeping his faith in his own heart; la Billardière to go back to England again; and Montauran to fight desperately, and to force the Vendeans to co-operate with him by means of the victories of which he dreamed.

These events had stirred up so many emotions in the soul of Mlle. de Verneuil, that she lay back in the carriage utterly prostrated and as if dead, when she had given the order to proceed to Fougères. Francine was silent, following the example of her mistress. The postilion, who was in terror of some fresh misadventure, made haste to reach the highroad, and very soon reached the top of La Pèlerine.

In the dense, white morning mists, Marie de Verneuil made her way across the wide and beautiful valley of the Couësnon, where this story began. From the summit of La Pèlerine she could hardly see the schistous rock upon which the town of Fougères is built, and from which the three travelers were still some two leagues distant. Mlle. de Verneuil felt chilled through with the cold, and thought of the poor infantryman perched up behind the carriage, in-

sisting in spite of his refusals that he should come in and sit beside Francine. The sight of Fougères drew her for a moment from her reverie. Moreover, as the guard stationed at the St. Leonard Gate refused admittance into the town to strangers, she was compelled to produce her credentials. Then she found herself protected at last from all hostile attempts as she came into this place, with its own townspeople for its sole defenders at the moment. The postilion could find no better sheltering roof for her than at the Post inn.

"Madame," said the Blue whom she had rescued, "if you should ever require to administer a sabre cut to any individual, my life is at your service. I am good at that. My name is Jean Falcon; I am called Beau-Pied; and I am a sergeant in the first company of Hulot's lads in the seventy-second demi-brigade, which they call the Mayençaise. Excuse my vanity and presumption; but I can do no more than offer you the life of a sergeant, because for the time being I have nothing else to put at your disposal." He turned on his heel and went away whistling.

"The lower one looks in the ranks of society," said Marie with bitterness, "the more one finds generosity of feeling without any parade of it. A marquis gives me up to death in return for life, while a sergeant . . . But there, let that be!"

When the beautiful Parisian lay in a well-warmed bed, her faithful Francine hung about, waiting in vain for the affectionate word that she was accustomed to hear; but her mistress saw her still standing there uneasily, and said with every mark of sadness:

"They call this a day, Francine, but I am ten years older for it."

The next morning, as she was getting up, Corentin presented himself to call upon Marie, who gave him admittance.

"Francine," she remarked, "my misfortune must be great indeed when I can tolerate the sight of Corentin."

But for all that, when she saw him again, she instinctively felt for the thousandth time towards the man a repugnance that an acquaintance of two years' standing had mitigated no whit.

"Well," said he, smiling; "I thought you were going to succeed. Was it not he then whom you got hold of?"

"Corentin," she answered slowly, with a sorrowful expression, "do not mention that affair to me unless I myself speak to you of it."

He walked to and fro in the room, attempting to divine the secret thoughts of this strange girl, in whose glance there was a something which at times had power enough to disconcert the cleverest men.

"I foresaw this check," he began, after a moment's pause. "I have been making inquiries, in case you might care to make this town your headquarters. We are in the very heart and centre of Chouannerie. Will you stay here?" The nod vouchsafed to him by way of a reply gave rise to conjectures as to yesterday's events on Corentin's part, which were partially correct. "I have taken a house for you," he went on; "one confiscated by the Nation, and as yet unsold. They are not very advanced in their notions hereabouts. Nobody has dared to buy the place, because the emigrant to whom it belonged is thought to be an awkward customer. It is close to St. Leonard's church, and, upon my honor, one enjoys a charming view from the windows. Something can be made of the hole; it is habitable; will you go into it?"

"Yes, at once," she exclaimed.

"But you must let me have a few hours in which to get it cleaned and set to rights, so that you may find everything to your mind."

"What does it matter?" she said. "I should make no difficulty about living in a convent or in a jail. However, you can arrange things so that I can be left to rest in absolute solitude this evening. There, you can leave me! Your presence is intolerable. I wish to be left alone with Francine. I am on better terms with her perhaps than with myself. . . . There, good-bye; go away!"

It was evident from the words thus volubly uttered, and imbued by turns with coquetry, wilfulness, and passion, that her serenity was completely restored. Slumber no doubt had gradually dispelled the impressions of the previous day, and reflection had brought her counsels of revenge. If dark thoughts at times were depicted upon her face, they seemed to bear witness to the power possessed by some women of burying their most enthusiastic feelings in the depths of their souls, and of that capacity for dissimulation which enables them to smile graciously while they scheme out the ruin of their victim.

She sat alone, absorbed in plans for getting the Marquis into her hands alive. For the first time she had known a life in accordance with her inmost wishes; but of that life nothing remained to her now but the longing for revenge —a revenge that should be absolute and unending. This was her sole thought, her one passionate desire. Francine's words and little services drew no response from Marie, who seemed to be sleeping with her eyes open; the live-long day went by, and there was no outward sign or movement of the life which is the expression of our thoughts. She lay reclined on a kind of ottoman which she had made with chairs and pillows, and not till evening came did she languidly let fall these words and no more, with her eyes upon Francine —"Yesterday, my child, I saw clearly how one can live for love's sole sake; to-day I have come to understand how one can die to have revenge. Yes! I would give my life to find him out, wherever he may be, to come across him once more, to entangle him, and to have him in my power. . . . But if, after a few days, I do not find this man who has slighted me lying humble and submissive at my feet; if I do not reduce him to an abject servitude, why, then, I shall be beneath contempt, and I shall be no more a woman—I shall be no longer myself!"

The house which Corentin had proposed to Mlle. de Verneuil was well adapted to gratify her innate love of refinement and luxury in her surroundings. He himself ap-

peared to have accumulated there everything which in his opinion ought to please her, with a lover's eagerness, or more properly speaking, with the anxious servility of a man in power seeking to attach to his own interest some inferior who is necessary to him. He came to Mlle. de Verneuil the next day to suggest a removal to this improvised dwelling-place. She scarcely did more than transfer herself from her rickety ottoman to a venerable sofa which Corentin had managed to find for her; but the fanciful Parisian entered into residence as if the house had belonged to her. She treated everything she saw with supreme indifference, and developed a sudden affinity with the oddments, which by degrees she appropriated to her own use, as if they had long been familiar to her. These are trifling details, but not without significance in the portraiture of an unusual character. She might have become well acquainted with this dwelling in her dreams or ever she saw the place; and here she lived upon the hatred within her, just as she would have existed upon love.

"At any rate," she said to herself, "I have not inspired in him that insulting kind of pity which is death; I do not owe my life to him. Oh, my first and last and only love! What an outcome of it all!"

She made a spring at the startled Francine. "Do you love too? Oh, yes! I remember, you are in love! How very fortunate I am to have a woman beside me who can understand! Well, my poor Francine, do not men seem to you to be horrible creatures? Why, he told me that he loved me! And he could not stand the slightest test . . . Yet if the whole world had spurned him, he should have found a refuge in my heart; if the whole universe had been against him, I would have stood by him. Once, I used to watch a world filled with beings who came and went; they were only indifferent things for me, but that world of mine was only melancholy, not dreadful; and now, what is it all without him? He will go on living though I am not there at his side, though I do not speak to him, nor touch him,

nor hold him and clasp him close. . . . Oh, rather than that, I will murder him myself as he sleeps!"

Francine looked at her in alarm for a moment without speaking; then she said in a gentle voice, "Murder the man that you love?"

"Ah! surely, when he loves me no longer." But after these fearful words, she hid her face in her hands, sank into her chair, and was mute.

The next day some one broke suddenly into her room without being announced. It was Hulot; his face was hard and stern, and Corentin came with him. She raised her eyes and trembled.

"You are come to require an account of your friends from me?" she said. "They are dead."

"I know it," answered Hulot. "They did not die in the service of the Republic."

"For me, and it was my doing. . . . You are about to speak to me of our country! Will our country give back life to those who die for her? Will she so much as avenge them? Now, I," she cried, "will avenge them!"

Baleful visions of the tragedy in which she had nearly fallen a victim rose up and formed themselves before her eyes; a mad impulse seized this gracious being, who held modesty to be a woman's first artifice, and she marched abruptly over to the amazed commandant.

"For a few murdered soldiers," she said, "I will bring a head worth thousands of others beneath the axe upon your scaffold. Women carry on war but seldom, yet you, however old you may be, may pick up excellent stratagems in my school. I will give over to your bayonets in him a whole family, his ancestors, his present, past, and future. Insomuch as I have been kind and true to him, so I will be crafty and false! Yes, commandant! I mean to bring this gallant gentleman home to me; he shall only leave my arms to go to his death! Yes! I shall never know a rival. The wretch pronounced his own death sentence: *'A day without a morrow!'* . . . We shall both of us be avenged, your Re-

public and I . . . The Republic!" she went on, with a strange inflection in her voice that startled Hulot; "so the rebel will die, after all, for bearing arms against his country? France herself will cheat me of my revenge? . . . Ah! one life is such a little thing—one death can only atone for a single crime! But since this gentleman has but one head to lose, in the night before he dies I will make him feel that he is losing more than a life. But before all things, commandant, for it will be you who will put him to death," and a sigh broke from her, "act in such a sort that nothing shall betray my treason; let him die with a full belief in my faith. That is all that I ask of you. Let him see nothing but me —me and my endearments!"

With that she stopped; but in the dark flush on her face Hulot and Corentin saw that anger and rage had not extinguished modesty. Marie shuddered violently as she uttered these last words; she seemed to listen for them afresh, as if she were not sure that she had spoken them. She trembled undisguisedly, and made the involuntary gesture of a woman who has suddenly dropped her veil.

"But you have had him already in your hands!" said Corentin.

"Very likely," she replied bitterly.

"Why did you stop me when I had hold of him?" asked Hulot.

"Eh, commandant! We did not know that it was *he!*" Suddenly, the excited woman who was hurriedly pacing to and fro, flinging fiery glances at the two witnesses of this tempest, grew calmer. "I hardly know myself," she said, and her tones were those of a man. "What is the good of talking? We must go in search of him!"

"Go in search of him?" repeated Hulot; "my dear child, mind that you do not. We are not masters of this countryside; and if you venture to stir a hundred paces out of the town, you will either be killed or taken prisoner."

"There is no such thing as danger for those who are seeking for vengeance!" she answered, and with a disdainful ges-

ture she dismissed the two men from her presence; the sight of them filled her with shame.

"What a woman!" Hulot exclaimed as he withdrew with Corentin. "What a notion those police fellows in Paris have had! But she will never give him up to us," he added with a shake of the head.

"Oh, yes, she will!" Corentin replied.

"Can you not see that she is in love with him?" said Hulot.

"That is exactly the reason. Moreover," said Corentin, as he looked at the astonished commandant, "I am on the spot to prevent any nonsense on her part; for to my thinking, comrade, there is no love affair worth three hundred thousand francs."

With that, this diplomatist of the Home Office left the soldier, who followed him with his eyes; and, when he no longer heard the sound of the other's footsteps, he heaved a sigh and remarked to himself: "So there is some advantage at times in being a mere thick-head like me? . . . *Tonnerre de Dieu!* If I hit upon the Gars, we will fight it out man to man, or my name is not Hulot; for now that they have instituted councils of war, if yonder fox is anything to go by, my conscience will be no cleaner, I should say, than any trooper's shirt who has gone under fire for the first time."

The massacre at the Vivetière and the desire to avenge his two friends had been quite as strong inducements to resume the command of his demi-brigade as the letter Hulot had received from the new minister Berthier, who informed him that under the circumstances his resignation could not be accepted. Along with the official dispatch came a confidential letter, containing no information concerning Mlle. de Verneuil's mission, but informing him that this incident was completely without the scope of military operations, and should therefore in no way hamper their progress. The share of the military leaders in that matter was confined, so it ran, "to seconding the honorable citoyenne if occasion should call for it."

The reports which Hulot received having made it clear to him that the mobilization of the Chouans was being directed upon Fougères, he threw two battalions of his demi-brigade into that important place, bringing them by forced marches and hidden ways. Everything about him had wrought to bring back all the fire of his youth into the veteran commandant—the perils of his country, a hatred of the aristocracy whose partisans were threatening such a considerable district, and the promptings of friendship.

"This, at last, is the life I was longing for!" cried Mlle. de Verneuil when she was alone with Francine. "However swiftly the hours may pass, they are like centuries of thought to me." She took Francine's hand impulsively, and these words fell from her, one by one, in a voice like the first robin's notes after a storm. "I cannot help it, my child. I always see those two exquisite lips; the short, slightly prominent chin, and those eyes of fire; I hear again the 'Hue!' of the postilion, and at last I fall to dreaming. . . . And why is there such hatred in me when I awake?"

She heaved a long sigh, and rose to her feet. She looked out for the first time over the country, which had been given over to civil war by the cruel noble whom she would fain combat—she and no other. The view had an attraction for her; it drew her out of doors to breathe more freely under the open sky; and if it was chance that determined her way, she was certainly under the influence of the dark power within us, which makes us look for a gleam of hope in some absurd course. Ideas that occur to us while we are under this spell are often realized; and then we attribute our instinctive insight to the faculty that we call presentiment—a power which is real, if unexplained, and which is ever ready at the beck and call of the passions like a parasite who sometimes utters a true word among his lies.

III.

A DAY WITHOUT A MORROW

As the final events of this story were largely determined by the character of the country in which they took place, a detailed description of it is unavoidable, for otherwise the catastrophe will be difficult to understand.

The town of Fougères is partly situated on a mass of schistous rock that might have fallen forward from the hills that close round the western end of the wide valley of the Couësnon, each of which is differently named in different places round about. A narrow ravine, with the little stream called the Nançon running at the bottom of it, separates the town from these hills. The eastern side of the mass of rock commands a view of the same landscape that the traveler enjoys from the top of La Pèlerine; the only prospect from the western side is along the tortuous valley of the Nançon; but there is one spot whence it is possible to see a segment of the great circle formed by the main valley as well as the picturesque windings of the smaller one that opens out into it. Here the townspeople had elected to make a promenade, hither Mlle. de Verneuil was betaking herself, and this very place was to be the stage on which the drama begun at the Vivetière was to be carried out. However picturesque, therefore, the other parts of the town of Fougères may be, attention must be exclusively directed to the disposition of the country that is visible from the highest point of the promenade.

To give an idea of the appearance of the rock of Fougères when seen from this side, a comparison might be made between it and one of those huge towers, about which Saracen architects have fashioned tier after tier of balconies,

connected each with each by spiral staircases. The topmost point of the rock terminates in a Gothic church with its crockets, spire and buttresses, which completes the almost perfect sugar-loaf form of the whole. Before the door of this church, which is dedicated to St. Leonard, lies a little irregularly shaped square. The soil there is banked up and sustained by a wall that runs round it like a balustrade, and it communicates with the promenade by a flight of steps. This esplanade runs round about the rock like a second cornice, several fathoms below the square of St. Leonard, presenting an open space planted with trees, which is brought to an end by the fortifications of the town. Then, after a further interval of some ten fathoms of rocks and masonry which support this terrace (thanks, partly to the fortunate disposition of the schist, and partly to patient industry), there lies a winding road called "The Queen's Staircase," cut out of the rock itself, and leading to a bridge built over the Nançon by Anne of Brittany. Underneath this road again, which makes a third cornice, the gardens slope in terraces down to the river, looking like tiers of staging covered with flowers.

Lofty crags, called the hills of St. Sulpice, after the name of the suburb of the town in which they rise, run parallel with the promenade and along the river side. Their sides slope gently down into the main valley, wherein they take a sharp turn towards the north. These steep, dark, and barren crags seem almost to touch the schistous rock of the promenade, coming in some places within a gunshot of them, and they shelter from the north wind a narrow valley some hundred fathoms in depth, wherein the Nançon divides itself into three streams, and waters a meadow-land pleasantly laid out and filled with houses.

To the south, just where the town, properly speaking, comes to an end, and the suburb of St. Leonard begins, the rock of Fougères makes a curve, grows less lofty and precipitous, turns into the main valley and stretches along the river, which is thus shut in between it and the hills of St.

Sulpice in a narrow pass. Thence the river flows in two streams towards the Couësnon into which it falls. This picturesque range of rocky hillsides is named the Nid-aux-Crocs. The dale which is shut in by them is called the valley of Gibarry, and its rich meadows produce a large proportion of the butter known to epicures as Prévalaye butter.

At the spot where the promenade abuts upon the fortifications, a tower rises called the Papegaut's Tower. The house in which Mlle. de Verneuil was staying was built upon this square structure. Beyond this point there is nothing but a sheer space, sometimes of wall, sometimes of rock, wherever the latter presents a smooth surface. The portion of the town that is built upon this lofty and impregnable base describes an immense half-moon, at the termination of which the rocks slope away and are hollowed out so as to give an outlet to the Nançon. Here stands the gate of St. Sulpice, through which the way lies into the suburb that bears the same name. On a knoll of granite rock, commanding the entrance into three valleys wherein several roads converge, rise the ancient crenelated turrets of the feudal castle of Fougères, one of the most considerable structures erected by the Dukes of Brittany, with its wall fifteen fathoms high and fifteen feet thick. On its eastern side the castle is protected by a pond in which the Nançon rises, flowing thence through the moats, and turning several mills between the gate of St. Sulpice and the drawbridges of the fortress. On the western side the perpendicular rocks on which the castle is built form a sufficient defence.

Thus, from the promenade to this magnificent relic of the Middle Ages, adorned with its mantling ivy and its turrets round or square, in any one of which a whole regiment might be quartered; the castle, the town, and its rock protected by a curtain of wall, or by scarps hewn in the rock itself, form one immense horseshoe, surrounded by precipices, on the sides of which (time aiding them) the Bretons have beaten out a few narrow footpaths. Blocks of stone pro-

ject here and there as if by way of decoration, or water oozes out through crannies where spindling trees are growing. Further on, a few less precipitous slabs of granite support a little grass which attracts the goats; and the heather grows everywhere, penetrating many a damp crevice and covering the dark broken surface with its rosy wreaths. In the depth of this great funnel the little river twists and winds in a land of meadow, always carpeted with soft verdure.

At the foot of the castle there rises, between several masses of granite, the Church dedicated to St. Sulpice, which gives its name to a suburb on the other side of the Nançon. This suburb seems to lie in the bottom of an abyss; the pointed steeple of its church is not as high as the rocks that seem ready to fall down upon it and its surrounding cottages, which are picturesquely watered by certain branches of the Nançon, shaded by trees and adorned with gardens. These make an irregular indentation in the half-moon described by the promenade, the town, and the castle; and their details are in quaint contrast to the sober-looking amphitheatre which they confront. The whole town of Fougères, with its churches and its suburbs, and even the hills of St. Sulpice, has for its frame and setting the heights of Rillé which form a part of the chain of hills that encircle the main valley of the Couësnon.

Such are the most striking of the natural features of this country. Its principal characteristic is a rugged wildness, softened by intervals of smiling land, by a happy mingling of the most magnificent works of man with the caprices of a soil vexed by unlooked-for contrasts; by an indescribable something that takes us at unawares, that amazes and overawes us. In no other part of France does the traveler meet with contrasts on so magnificent a scale as in this wide valley of the Couësnon and among the dales that are almost hidden between the craggy rocks of Fougères and the heights of Rillé. There is beauty of a rare kind in which chance is the predominating element, but which, for all

that, lacks no charm due to the harmony of nature. Here are clear, limpid, rushing streams; hills clad in the luxuriant vegetation of these districts; stern masses of rock and shapely buildings; natural fortifications and towers of granite built by man. Here are all the effects wrought by the play of light and shadow, all the varied hues of different kinds of foliage so highly valued by artists; groups of houses alive with a busy population, and solitary places where the granite scarcely affords a hold to the pale lichens that cling about stone surfaces; here, in short, is every suggestion of beauty or of dread that can be looked for from a landscape—a poetry full of constantly renewed magic, of pictures of the grandest kind, and charming scenes of country life. Here is Brittany in its flower.

The Papegaut's Tower, as it is called, upon which the house occupied by Mlle. de Verneuil was built, has its foundations at the very bottom of the precipice, and rises to the level of the esplanade which has been constructed, cornice fashion, in front of St. Leonard's church. The view from this house, which is isolated on three of its sides, includes the great horseshoe (which has its starting-point in the tower itself), the winding valley of the Nançon, and the square of St. Leonard. The dwelling is one of a row of houses three centuries old, built of wood, and lying in a parallel line with the north side of the church in such a manner as to form a blind alley with it. The alley opens on to a steep road that passes along one side of the church and leads to the gate of St. Leonard, towards which Mlle. de Verneuil was descending.

Marie naturally felt no inclination to go up into the square before the church, beneath which she was standing, so she turned in the direction of the promenade. When she had passed through the little green-painted barrier, which stood before the guardhouse now established in the tower of St. Leonard's Gate, the conflict within her was stilled by the sight of the wonderful view. She first admired the wide stretch of the main valley of the Couësnon—the whole

length and breadth of it met her eyes, from the summit of La Pèlerine to the level plain, through which the road runs to Vitré. Then her gaze rested upon the Nid-aux-Crocs, upon the winding lines of the valley of Gibarry, and upon the ridges of the hills, bathed as they were in the glow of the misty sunset. The depth of the valley of the Nançon almost startled her; the tallest poplars down below scarcely reached the height of the garden walls that lay beneath the Queen's Staircase. On she went, one marvel still succeeding to another, till she reached a point whence she could see the main valley beyond the dale of Gibarry, and the whole lovely landscape was framed by the horseshoe of the town, the crags of St. Sulpice, and the heights of Rillé.

At that hour of day, the smoke, rising from the houses in the suburbs and the valleys, made wreaths of cloud in the atmosphere; every object dawned on the sight through a sort of bluish canopy. The garish daylight hues had begun to fade, the tone of the sky changed to a pearly gray, the moon flung its misty light over the depths of the fair land below,—all the surroundings tended to steep the soul in musings and to call memories of beloved forms.

Suddenly she lost all interest in the shingle roofs of the suburb of St. Sulpice, in its church with the bold spire that was all but swallowed up in the depths of the valley, in the ivy and clematis that had grown for centuries over the walls of the old fortress, whence the Nançon issues, boiling over its mill-wheels, and in all else in the landscape. In vain the sunset poured a golden dust, and sheets of crimson light over the peaceful dwellings scattered among the rocks, along the stream, and in the meadows far below,—she was staring fixedly at the crags of St. Sulpice. The wild hope that had brought her out upon the promenade had been miraculously realized.

Across the *ajoncs* and the bushes of broom that grew along the tops of the opposite hillsides, she thought that, in spite of their goatskin clothing, she could recognize several of the guests at the Vivetière. The Gars was conspicuous among

them; his slightest movements stood out against the soft glow of the sunset. Some paces behind the principal group she saw her formidable enemy Mme. du Gua. For a moment Mlle. de Verneuil might have thought that she was dreaming, but her rival's hatred very soon made it plain to her that everything in this dream had life. The rapt attention with which she was watching every slightest gesture on the part of the Marquis prevented her from noticing the care with which Mme. du Gua was aiming a rifle at her. The echoes of the hills rang with the report, and a ball whistling close to Marie revealed her rival's skill to her.

"She is sending me her card!" she exclaimed, smiling to herself. In a moment there was a cry in chorus of "Who goes there?" echoed by sentinel after sentinel, all the way from the castle to St. Leonard's Gate, which made the Chouans aware of the precautions taken by the Fougerais, since the least vulnerable side of their ramparts was so well guarded.

"It is she, and it is he!" said Marie to herself. With the speed of lightning the idea of seeking, tracking, and surprising the Marquis flashed across her. "I have no weapon!" she exclaimed. She bethought herself that, just as she was leaving Paris, she had thrown into a trunk an elegant dagger, a thing that had once belonged to a sultan. She had provided herself with it when she set out for the scene of the war in the same humor which prompts some amusing beings to equip themselves with notebooks, in which to jot down the ideas that occur to them upon a journey. She had been less attracted, however, by the prospect of bloodshed than by the mere pleasure of carrying a beautiful jeweled kandjar, and of playing with the blade, as clean as an eye glance. Three days ago, when she had sought to kill herself to escape her rival's hideous revenge, she had keenly regretted leaving this weapon in her trunk.

In a moment she reached the house again, found the dagger, thrust it into her belt, muffled a great shawl round about her shoulders, wound a black lace scarf about her hair, cov-

ered her head with a large flapping hat, like those worn by the Chouans, which she borrowed from a servant about the house; and, with the self-possession which the passions sometimes bestow, she took up the glove belonging to the Marquis, which Marche-à-Terre had given to her as a safe-conduct. In response to Francine's alarmed inquiries, she replied:

"What would you have; I would go to hell to look for *him!*" and she went back to the promenade.

The Gars was still there in the same place, but he was alone. From the direction taken by his perspective-glass, he appeared to be scrutinizing with a soldier's minute attention the various fords of the Nançon, the Queen's Staircase, and the road that starts from the gate of St. Sulpice, winds by the church, and joins the highroad within range of the guns of the castle. Mlle. de Verneuil sprang down the narrow paths made by the goatherds and their flocks upon the slopes of the promenade, gained the Queen's Staircase, reached the foot of the crags, crossed the Nançon, passed through the suburb, found her way instinctively, like a bird in the desert, among the perilous scarped rocks of St. Sulpice, and very soon reached a slippery track over the granite boulders. In spite of the bushes of broom, the thorny *ajoncs,* and the sharp loose stones, she began to climb with an amount of energy unknown perhaps in man, but which woman, when completely carried away by passion, possesses for a time.

Night overtook Marie just as she reached the summit, and tried to discover, by the pale moonlight, the way which the Marquis must have taken. It was a search made persistently but without any success. From the silence that prevailed throughout the region she gathered that the Chouans and their leader had retired. She suddenly relinquished the effort begun in passion, along with the hope that had inspired it. She found herself benighted and alone in the midst of a strange country where war was raging; she began to reflect, and Hulot's warning and Mme. du Gua's shot

made her shudder with fear. The silence of night upon the hills was so deep that she could hear the least rustle of a wandering leaf, even a long way off; such faint sounds as these, trembling in the air, gave a gloomy idea of the utter solitude and quiet.

The wind blew furiously in the sky above, bringing up clouds that cast shadows below; the effects of alternate light and darkness increased her fears, by giving a fantastic and terrifying appearance to objects of the most harmless kind.

She turned her eyes towards the houses in Fougères; the lights of every household glimmered like stars on earth, and all at once she descried the Papegaut tower. The distance she must traverse in order to reach her dwelling was short indeed, but that distance consisted of a precipice. She had a sufficiently clear recollection of the abysses at the brink of the narrow footpath by which she had come, to see that she would incur greater peril by trying to return to Fougères than by continuing her enterprise. She reflected that the Marquis' glove would deprive her nocturnal excursion of all its dangers, if the Chouans should be in possession of the country. She had only Mme. du Gua to dread. At the thought of her, Marie clutched her dagger and tried to go in the direction of a house, of the roofs of which she had caught a glimpse as she reached the crags of St. Sulpice. She made but slow progress. Never before had she known the majesty of darkness that oppresses a solitary being at night in the midst of a wild country, over which the mountains, like a company of giants, seem to bow their lofty heads.

The rustle of her dress, caught by the gorse, made her tremble more than once; more than once she quickened her pace, only to slacken it again with the thought that her last hour had come. But circumstances very soon assumed a character, which might perhaps have daunted the boldest men, and which threw Marie into one of those panics that make such heavy demands upon the springs of life within us, that everything, strength as weakness, is exaggerated in the individual. The weakest natures at such times show

an unexpected strength; and the strongest grow frantic with terror.

Marie heard strange sounds at a little distance. They were vague and distinct at the same time, just as the surrounding night was lighter and darker by turns. They seemed to indicate tumult and confusion. She strained her ears to catch them. They rose from the depths of the earth, which appeared to be shaking with the tramp of a great multitude of men on the march. A momentary gleam of light allowed Mlle. de Verneuil to see, at the distance of a few paces, a long file of horrid forms swaying like ears of corn in the fields—stealing along like goblin shapes. But hardly had she seen them when darkness, like a black curtain, fell again and hid from her this fearful vision full of yellow and glittering eyes. She shrank back and rushed swiftly to the top of a slope, to escape three of these horrible figures that were approaching her.

"Did you see him?" asked one.

"I felt a cold wind when he passed near me," a hoarse voice replied.

"I myself breathed the dank air and the smell of a graveyard," said a third.

"How pale he is!" the first speaker began.

"Why has *he* returned alone out of all who fell at La Pèlerine?" asked the second.

"Ah, why indeed?" replied the third. "Why should those who belong to the Sacred Heart have the preference? However, I would rather die unconfessed than wander about as he does, neither eating nor drinking, without any blood in his veins or flesh on his bones."

"Ah! . . ."

This exclamation, or rather fearful yell, broke from the group as one of the Chouans pointed to the slender form and pallid face of Mlle. de Verneuil, who was flying with the speed of fear, while none of them caught the slightest sound of her movements.

"There he is!—Here he is!—Where is he?—There!—

Here!—He has vanished!—No!—Yes!—Do you see him?" The words rolled out like the monotonous sound of waves upon the beach.

Mlle. de Verneuil went on bravely towards the house, and saw the dim figures of a crowd which fled away at her approach with every sign of panic-stricken fear. A strange force within her seemed to urge her on; its influence was overpowering her; a sensation of corporeal lightness, which she could not understand, was a fresh source of terror to her. The shapes which rose in masses at her approach, as if from under the earth, where they appeared to be lying, gave groans which seemed to have nothing human about them. At last, and not without difficulty, she reached a garden, now lying waste, with all its fencing and hedges broken down. She showed her glove to a sentinel who stopped her. The moonlight fell upon her form, and at the sight the sentinel, who had pointed his carbine at Marie, let the weapon fall from his hand, uttering a hoarse cry that rang through the country round about.

She saw large masses of buildings, with a light here and there which showed that some of the rooms were inhabited; and without further let or hindrance she reached the wall of the house. Through the first window towards which she went she beheld Mme. du Gua and the chiefs who had come together at the Vivetière. This sight, combined with the consciousness of the peril she was in, made her reckless. She flung herself violently upon a low opening, covered with massive iron bars, and discerned the Marquis two paces distant from her, melancholy and alone, in a long vaulted hall. The reflections of the firelight from the hearth, before which he was sitting in a cumbrous chair, lighted up his face with flickering hues of red that made the whole scene look like a vision. The poor girl strained herself to the bars, trembling, but otherwise motionless; she hoped that she should hear him if he spoke in the deep silence that prevailed. She saw him looking pale, dejected, and disheartened; she flattered herself that she was one of the causes of his mel-

ancholy, and her anger turned to sympathy, and sympathy to tenderness; she suddenly felt that it was not vengeance alone that had drawn her thither. The Marquis rose to his feet, turned his head, and stood bewildered when he beheld Mlle. de Verneuil's face as in a cloud there. He made a sign of scorn and impatience as he cried, "Must I see that she-devil always before me, even in my waking hours?"

This intense contempt he had conceived for her drew a frenzied laugh from the poor girl. The young chief shuddered at it, and sprang to the window. Mlle. de Verneuil fled. She heard a man's footsteps behind her, and took her pursuer for Montauran. In her desire to escape from him she discerned no obstacles; she would have scaled walls or flown through the air; she could have taken the road to hell if so be she might read no longer, in letters of flame, the words, "He scorns you!" written upon his forehead—words which a voice repeated within her in trumpet tones. After walking on, she knew not whither, she stopped, for a chilly dampness seemed to strike through her. She heard the footsteps of several people, and impelled by fear, she descended a staircase that led into an underground cellar. As she reached the lowest step, she listened for the footsteps of the pursuers, trying to ascertain their direction; but though the sounds without were turbulent enough, she could hear the lamentable groans of a human being within, which added to her terrors.

A streak of light from the head of the staircase led her to fear lest her hiding-place had been discovered by her persecutors. Her desire to escape them lent her fresh strength. A few moments later, when her ideas were more collected, she found it very difficult to explain the way in which she had contrived to scramble up the low wall on the top of which she was hiding. At first she did not even notice the cramp which her constrained position caused her to experience; but the pain at last grew intolerable, for, under the arch of the vault, she was much in the position of a crouching Venus ensconced by some amateur in too narrow a niche.

The wall itself was built of granite, and fairly broad; it separated the staircase from the cellar whence the groans were issuing. She soon saw a stranger clad in goatskins come down the staircase beneath her, and turn under the archway, without the least sign about him to indicate an excited search. In her eagerness to discover any chance of saving herself, Mlle. de Verneuil waited anxiously till the cellar was illuminated by the light which the stranger was carrying; then she beheld on the floor a shapeless but living mass, trying to drag itself towards a certain part of the wall by violent and repeated jerks, like the convulsive writhings of a carp that has been drawn from the river and laid on the bank.

A small resinous torch soon cast a bluish and uncertain light over the cellar. In spite of the romance with which Mlle. de Verneuil had invested the groined roof that rang with the sounds of agonized entreaties, she was compelled to recognize the fact that she was in an underground kitchen which had been long unused. Thus illuminated, the shapeless mass took the form of a short, stout person whose every limb had been carefully tied, but who seemed to have been left on the damp flags of the pavement without any other precaution on the part of those who had seized him.

At sight of the stranger (who carried a light in one hand and a faggot in the other), the prisoner gave a deep groan, which wrought so powerfully upon Mlle. de Verneuil's feelings that she forgot her own terror and despair, and the frightful cramp which was benumbing her doubled-up limbs; she could scarcely keep herself still. The Chouan flung down his faggot upon the hearth, after assuring himself of the solidity of an old pothook which hung down the whole length of a sheet of cast iron, and set the wood alight with his torch. Mlle. de Verneuil then recognized, not without alarm, the cunning Pille-Miche, to whom her rival had assigned her. His form, lighted up by the flames, looked very like one of the tiny grotesque figures that Germans carve in wood. A broad grin overspread his furrowed and sunburned face at the wails that went up from his prisoner.

"You see," he remarked to the sufferer, "that Christians such as we are do not go back on our words as you do. This fire here will take some of the stiffness out of your legs, and out of your hands and tongue too. . . . But hold on! I do not see a dripping-pan to put under your feet, and they are so fat that they might put the fire out. Your house must be very badly furnished when you cannot find everything in it to make the master thoroughly comfortable when he is warming himself."

At this the victim uttered a piercing shriek, as if he hoped that his voice would rise above the arched roof, and bring some one to his rescue.

"Sing away as much as you like, M. d'Orgemont! They have all gone to bed upstairs, and Marche-à-Terre is coming; he will shut the cellar door."

As he spoke, Pille-Miche rapped the butt end of his carbine over the mantel-piece, the flags on the kitchen floor, the walls and the stoves, trying to discover the place where the miser had hidden his gold. The search was so cleverly conducted that d'Orgemont did not utter a further sound. He seemed possessed by the fear that some frightened servant might have betrayed him; for though he had trusted nobody, his habits might have given rise to very well-grounded suspicions. From time to time Pille-Miche turned sharply and looked at his victim, as in the children's game, when they try to guess from the unconscious expression of one of their number the spot where he has hidden a given object as they move hither and thither in search of it. D'Orgemont showed some alarm for the Chouan's benefit when he struck a hollow sound from the stoves, and seemed to have a mind to divert Pille-Miche's credulous greed in this way for a time.

Just then three other Chouans came running down the staircase, and suddenly entered the kitchen. Pille-Miche abandoned his search when he saw Marche-à-Terre, flinging a glance at d'Orgemont with all the ferocity that his disappointed avarice had aroused in him.

"Marie Lambrequin has come to life again!" said Marche-

à-Terre, with a preoccupation that showed how all other interests faded away before such a momentous piece of news.

"I am not surprised at that," answered Pille-Miche; "he took the sacrament so often! He seemed to have *le bon Dieu* all to himself."

"Aha!" remarked Mène-à-Bien. "But it is of no more help to him now than shoes to a dead man. He did not receive absolution before that business at La Pèlerine, and there he is! He misguided that girl of Gogelu's, and was weighed down by a mortal sin. Besides that, the Abbé Gudin told us that he would have to wait a couple of months before he could come back for good. We saw him go along in front, every man jack of us. He is white, and cold, and he flits about; there is the scent of the grave about him."

"And his reverence assured us that if the ghost could catch hold of anybody, he would make just such another of him," the fourth Chouan put in.

The wry face of the last speaker aroused Marche-à-Terre from religious musings prompted by the newly-wrought miracle, which, according to the Abbé Gudin, might be renewed for every pious champion of religion and royalty.

"Now you see, Galope-Chopine," he said to the neophyte, with a certain gravity, "what comes of the slightest omission of the duties commanded by our holy religion. St. Anne of Auray counseled us not to pass over the smallest faults among ourselves. Your cousin Pille-Miche has asked for the *surveillance* of Fougères for you; the Gars has intrusted you with it, and you will be well paid. But you, perhaps, know the sort of flour we knead into bread for traitors?"

"Yes, M. Marche-à-Terre."

"Do you know why I tell you that? There are folk who hint that you have a hankering after cider and round pence; but there is to be no feathering of your nest, you are to be *our* man now."

"With all due respect, M. Marche-à-Terre, cider and pence

are two good things which do not anywise hinder salvation."

"If my cousin makes any blunders," said Pille-Miche, "it will be for want of knowing better."

"No matter how it happens," cried Marche-à-Terre in a voice that shook the roof, "if anything goes wrong, I shall not let him off. You shall answer for him," he added to Pille-Miche; "if he gets himself into trouble, I will take it out of the lining of your goatskins."

"But, asking your pardon, M. Marche-à-Terre," Galope-Chopine began, "hasn't it often happened to you yourself to mistake *Contre-Chuins* for *Chuins*?"

"My friend," replied Marche-à-Terre in a dry tone of voice, "do not let that happen to you again, or I will slice you in two like a turnip. Those who are sent out by the Gars will have his glove. But since this affair at the Vivetière, the Grande-Garce fastens a green ribbon to it."

Pille-Miche jogged his comrade's elbow sharply, pointing out d'Orgemont, who was pretending to sleep; but Marche-à-Terre and Pille-Miche knew by experience that no one had ever yet slept by the side of their fire, and though the last remarks to Galope-Chopine had been spoken in low tones, yet the sufferer might have understood them; so all four of the Chouans looked at him for a moment, and no doubt concluded that fear had deprived him of the use of his senses. Suddenly Marche-à-Terre gave a slight sign; Pille-Miche drew off d'Orgemont's shoes and stockings, Mène-à-Bien and Galope-Chopine seized him by the waist and carried him to the hearth. Next Marche-à-Terre took a band from the faggot and bound the miser's feet to the pot-hook. All these proceedings, together with the incredible quickness of their movements, forced cries from the victim, which grew heart-rending when Pille-Miche had heaped up the glowing coals under his legs.

"My friends, my good friends," cried d'Orgemont, "you will hurt me! I am a Christian as you are. . . ."

"You are lying in your throat," answered Marche-à-Terre.

"Your brother denied the existence of God, and you yourself bought the Abbey of Juvigny. The Abbé Gudin says that we may roast apostates without scruple."

"But my brethren in religion, I do not refuse to pay you."

"We gave you two weeks, and now two months have passed, and Galope-Chopine here has received nothing."

"Then you have received nothing, Galope-Chopine?" asked the miser in despair.

"Nothing whatever, M. d'Orgemont," replied the alarmed Galope-Chopine.

The cries which had become a continuous kind of growl, like the death-rattle of a dying man, began afresh with extraordinary violence. The Chouans were as much used to this kind of scene as to seeing dogs go about without shoes; and were looking on so coolly while d'Orgemont writhed and yelled, that they might have been travelers waiting round the fire in an inn-kitchen until the joint is sufficiently roasted to eat.

"I am dying! I am dying!" cried the victim, "and you will not have my money."

Violent as his outcries were, Pille-Miche noticed that the fire had not yet scorched him; it was stirred therefore in a very artistic fashion, so as to make the flames leap a little higher. At this, d'Orgemont said in dejected tones:

"Untie me, my friends. . . . What do you want? A hundred crowns? A thousand? Ten thousand? A hundred thousand? I offer you two hundred crowns."

His tone was so piteous that Mlle. de Verneuil forgot her own danger, and an exclamation broke from her.

"Who spoke?" asked Marche-à-Terre.

The Chouans cast uneasy glances about them. The very men who were so courageous under a murderous fire from the cannon's mouth dared not face a ghost. Pille-Miche alone heard with undivided attention the confession which increasing torments wrung from his victim.

"Five hundred crowns. . . . Yes, I will pay it!" said the miser.

"Pshaw! Where are they?" calmly responded Pille-Miche.

"Eh? Oh, they are under the first apple tree. . . . Holy Virgin! At the end of the garden, to the left. . . . You are bandits! . . . You are robbers! . . . Oh, I am dying. . . . There are ten thousand francs there."

"I will not take francs," said Marche-à-Terre; "they must be livres. Your Republican crowns have heathen figures on them. They will never pass."

"It is all in livres, in good louis d'or. But let me loose, let me loose. . . . You know where my life is. . . . my hoard!"

The four Chouans looked at each other, considering which of their number could be trusted with the errand of unearthing the money. But just then their ferocious cruelty had so revolted Mlle. de Verneuil, that although she could not be sure that the rôle assigned to her by her pale face would still preserve her from danger, she cried bravely in a deep tone of voice, "Do you not fear the wrath of God? Unbind him, you savages!"

The Chouans looked up. They saw eyes that shone like stars, in mid-air, and fled in terror. Mlle. de Verneuil sprang down into the kitchen, ran up to d'Orgemont, and drew him from the fire with such energy that the faggot band snapped, then with the blade of her dagger she cut the cords with which he was bound. As soon as the miser was liberated and stood on his feet, the first expression that crossed his face was a dolorous but sardonic smile. "Off with you!" he said; "go to the apple-tree, brigands! . . . Ho! ho! This is the second time that I have hoodwinked them, and they shall not get hold of me a third time!"

Just then a woman's voice sounded without. "A ghost!" cried Mme. du Gua. "A *ghost!* Idiots! It is *she!* A thousand crowns to any one who will bring that harlot's head to me!"

Mlle. de Verneuil turned pale, but the miser smiled. He took her hand, drew her under the mantel-board of the chimney, and saw that she left no least trace of her passage by

leading her round in such a way that the fire, which took up but a little space, was not disturbed. He pressed a spring, the sheet of cast-iron rose; and before their foes came back into the cellar, the heavy door of their hiding-place had slipped noiselessly back again. Then the fair Parisian understood the carp-like struggles which had been made by the luckless banker, and to which she had been a witness.

"You see, madame!" cried Marche-à-Terre. "The ghost has taken the Blue for his comrade."

Great must their alarm have been, for such a dead silence followed his words that d'Orgemont and his companion could hear the Chouans muttering, *"Ave, sancta Anna Auriaca gratia plena, Dominus tecum,"* and so forth.

"The simpletons are saying their prayers!" exclaimed d'Orgemont.

"Are you not afraid," said Mlle. de Verneuil to her companion, "of making known our hiding-place?"

The old miser's laugh dispelled the Parisian girl's fears.

"The plate is set in a slab of granite ten inches thick. We can hear them, but they cannot hear us." He then gently took the hand of his liberatress, and led her towards a crevice through which the fresh breeze came in whiffs; she guessed that this opening had been contrived in the shaft of the chimney.

"Aha!" d'Orgemont began again. "The devil! My legs smart a bit. That 'Filly of Charette's,' as they call her at Nantes, is not such a fool as to gainsay those faithful believers of hers. She knows very well that if they were not so besotted, they would not fight against their own interests. There she is, praying along with them. It must be a pretty sight to see her saying her *Ave* to St. Anne of Auray! She would be better employed in plundering a coach so as to pay me back those four thousand francs that she owes me. What with the costs and the interest, it mounts up to quite four thousand seven hundred and forty-five francs, and some centimes over."

Their prayer ended, the Chouans rose from their knees and

went. Old d'Orgemont squeezed Mlle. de Verneuil's hand by way of apprising her that, nevertheless, danger still existed.

"No, madame," cried Pille-Miche after a pause of a few minutes, "you might stop here for ten years. They will not come back."

"But *she* has not gone out; she must be here!" persisted "Charette's Filly."

"No, no, madame; they have flown right through the walls. Did not the devil, once before, fly away from here with a priest who had taken the oath under our eyes?"

"You are a miser as he is, Pille-Miche, and yet you cannot see that the old niggard might very probably spend some thousands of livres in making a recess in the foundations of these vaults, with a secret entrance to it."

The girl and the miser heard the guffaw that broke from Pille-Miche. "Very true!" he said.

"Stop here," Mme. du Gua went on. "Lie in wait for them as they come out. For one single shot, I will give you all that you will find in our usurer's treasury. If you want me to pardon you for selling that girl, after I had told you to kill her, you must obey me."

"Usurer!" said old d'Orgemont, "and yet I only charged her nine per cent on the loan. I had a mortgage, it is true, as a security. But now you see how grateful she is! Come, madame; if God punishes us for doing ill, the devil is here to punish us for doing well; and man's position between these two extremities, without any notion of what the future may be, always looks, to my thinking, like a sum in proportion, wherein the value of x is undiscoverable."

He fetched a hollow-sounding sigh which was peculiar to him; for his breath as it passed through his larynx seemed to come in contact with and to strike two aged and relaxed vocal cords. The sound made by Pille-Miche and Mme. du Gua as they tried the walls, the vaulted roof, and the pavement seemed to reassure d'Orgemont; he took his liberatress' hand to help her to climb a narrow spiral staircase, hollowed

in the thickness of the granite rock. When they had come up a score of steps the faint glow of a lamp lighted up their faces. The miser stopped and turned to his companion, looking closely at her face as if he had been gazing upon and turning over and over some doubtful bill to be discounted. He heaved his terrible sigh.

"When I brought you here," he said, after a moment's pause, "I completely discharged the obligation under which you laid me; so I do not see why I should give——"

"Leave me here, sir; I want nothing of you," she said.

Her last words, and possibly also the contempt visible in the beautiful face, reassured the little old man, for he went on, after a fresh sigh:

"Ah! when I brought you here, I did too much not to go through with it——"

He politely helped Marie to climb some steps, arranged in a somewhat peculiar fashion, and brought her, half willingly, half reluctantly, into a little closet, four feet square, lighted by a lamp that hung from the roof. It was easy to see that the miser had made every preparation for spending more than one day in this retreat, in case the exigencies of civil war compelled him to make some stay there.

"Don't go near the wall! you might get covered with white dust," d'Orgemont exclaimed suddenly, as he thrust his hand hastily between the girl's shawl and the wall, which seemed to be newly whitewashed. The old miser's action produced an exactly opposite effect to the one intended. Mlle. de Verneuil looked straight in front of her at once, and saw a sort of construction in a corner. A cry of terror broke from her as she remarked its shape, for she thought that some human being had been put there in a standing position, and had been covered with plaster. D'Orgemont made a menacing sign, imposing silence upon her, and his own little china-blue eyes showed as much alarm as his companion's.

"Foolish girl!" cried he, "did you think I had murdered him? . . . That is my brother," he said, and there was a melancholy change in his sigh. "He was the first *recteur*

to take the oath, and this was the one refuge where he was safe from the fury of the Chouans and of his fellow-priests. To persecute such a well-regulated man as that? He was my elder brother; he had the patience to teach me the decimal system, he and no other. Oh! he was a worthy priest! He was thrifty, and knew how to save. He died four years ago. I do not know what his disease was; but these priests, you see, have a habit of kneeling in prayer from time to time, and possibly he could never get used to the standing position here, as I myself have done. . . . I put him here; otherwise *they* would have disinterred him. Some day I may be able to bury him in consecrated earth, as the poor fellow used to say, for he only took the oath through fear."

A tear filled the hard eyes of the little old man. His red wig looked less ugly to the girl, who turned her own eyes away with an inward feeling of reverence for his sorrow; but notwithstanding his softened mood, d'Orgemont spoke again. "Do not go near the wall, or you——"

He did not take his gaze off Mlle. de Verneuil's eyes, for in this way he hoped to prevent her from scrutinizing the partition walls of the closet, in which the scanty supply of air hardly sufficed for the requirements of breathing. Yet Marie managed to steal a glance round about her, undetected by her Argus, and from the eccentric protuberances in the walls she inferred that the miser had built them himself out of bags of gold and silver.

In another moment, d'Orgemont was seized with a strange kind of ecstasy. The painful smarting sensation in his legs, and his apprehensions at the sight of a human being among his treasures, were plainly to be seen in every wrinkle; but, at the same time, there was an unaccustomed glow in his dry eyes; a generous emotion was aroused in him by the dangerous proximity of his neighbor, with the pink and white cheeks that invited kisses, and the dark velvet-like glances; so that the hot blood surged to his heart in such a way that he hardly knew whether it betokened life or death.

"Are you married?" he asked in a faltering voice.

"No," she answered, smiling.

"I have a little property," he said, heaving his peculiar sigh, "though I am not so rich as they all say I am. A young girl like you should be fond of diamonds, jewelry, carriages, and gold," he added, looking about him in a dismayed fashion. "I have all these things to give you at my death. . . . And if you liked——"

There was so much calculation in the old man's eyes, even while this fleeting fancy possessed him, that while she shook her head, Mlle. de Verneuil could not help thinking that the miser had thought to marry her, simply that he might bury his secret in the heart of a second self.

"Money," she said, with an ironical glance at d'Orgemont that left him half pleased, half vexed, "money is nothing to me. If all the gold that I have refused were here, you would be three times richer than you are."

"Don't go near the wall——"

"And yet nothing was asked of me but one look," she went on with indescribable pride.

"You were wrong. It was a capital piece of business. Just think of it——"

"Think that I have just heard a voice sounding here," broke in Mlle. de Verneuil, "and that one single syllable of it has more value for me than all your riches."

"You do not know how much——"

Before the miser could prevent her, Marie moved with her finger a little colored print, representing Louis XV. on horseback, and suddenly saw the Marquis beneath her, engaged in loading a blunderbuss. The opening concealed by the tiny panel, over which the print was pasted, apparently corresponded with some ornamental carving on the ceiling of the next room, where the Royalist general had no doubt been sleeping. D'Orgemont slid the old print back again with extreme heedfulness, and looked sternly at the young girl.

"Do not speak a word, if you value your life! It is no

cockle-shell that you have grappled," he whispered in her ear, after a pause. "Do you know that the Marquis of Montauran draws a revenue of more than a hundred thousand livres from the rents of estates which have not yet been sold? And the Consuls have just issued a decree putting a stop to the sequestrations. I saw it in the paper, in the *Primidi de l'Ille-et-Vilaine*. Aha! the Gars there is a prettier man now, is he not? Your eyes are sparkling like two new louis d'ors."

Mlle. de Verneuil's glances had become exceedingly animated when she heard afresh the sounds of the voice that she knew so well. Since she had been standing there, buried as it were in a mine of wealth, her mind, which had been overwhelmed by these occurrences, regained its elasticity. She seemed to have made a sinister resolve, and to have some idea of the method of carrying it out.

"There is no recovering from such contempt as that," she said to herself; "and if he is to love me no more, I will kill him! No other woman shall have him!"

"No, Abbé, no!" cried the young chief, whose voice made itself heard; "it must be so."

"My lord Marquis," the Abbé Gudin remonstrated stiffly, "you will scandalize all Brittany by giving this ball at Saint James. Our villages are not stirred up by dancers, but by preachers. Have some small arms, and not fiddles."

"Abbé, you are clever enough to know that only in a general assembly of all our partisans can I see what I can undertake with them. A dinner seems to give a better opportunity of scrutinizing their countenances, and of understanding their intentions, than any possible espionage, which is moreover abhorrent to me. We will make them talk, glass in hand."

Marie trembled when she heard these words, for the idea of going to the ball, and of there avenging herself, occurred to her.

"Do you take me for an idiot, with your sermon against dancing!" Montauran went on. "Would you not yourself figure in a chaconne very willingly to find yourself re-estab-

lished under your new name of Fathers of the Faith? Do you really not know that Bretons get up from mass to have a dance? Do you really not know that Messieurs Hyde de Neuville and d'Andigné had a conference with the First Consul, five days ago, over the question of restoring his Majesty, Louis XVIII.? If I am preparing at this moment to venture so rash a stroke, it is only to make the weight of our iron-bound shoes felt in these deliberations. Do you not know that all the chiefs in la Vendée, even Fontaine himself, are talking of submission? Ah! sir, the princes have clearly been misled as to the condition of things in France. The devotion which people tell them about is the devotion of placemen. Abbé, if I have dipped my feet in blood, I will not wade waist-deep in it without knowing wherefore. My devotion is for the King, and not for four crack-brained enthusiasts, for men overwhelmed with debt like Rifoël, for *chauffers* and——"

"Say it straight out, sir, for abbés who collect imposts on the highways so as to carry on the war!" interrupted the Abbé Gudin.

"Why should I not say it?" the Marquis answered tartly. "I will say more—the heroic age of la Vendée is past."

"My lord Marquis, we shall know how to work miracles without your aid."

"Yes, like the miracle in Marie Lambrequin's case," the Marquis answered, smiling. "Come, now, Abbé, let us have done with it. I know that you yourself do not shrink from danger, and you bring down a Blue or say your *oremus* equally well. God helping me, I hope to make you take a part in the coronation of the King with a mitre on your head."

This last phrase certainly had a magical effect upon the Abbé, for there sounded the ring of a rifle, and he cried:

"I have fifty cartridges in my pockets, my lord Marquis, and my life is at the King's service."

"That is another debtor of mine," the miser said to Mlle. de Verneuil. "I am not speaking of a paltry five or six hun-

dred crowns which he borrowed of me, but of a debt of blood, which I hope will be paid in full. The fiendish Jesuit will never have as much evil befall him as I wish him; he swore that my brother should die, and stirred up the district against him. And why? Because the poor man had been afraid of the new laws!"

He put his ear to a particular spot in his hiding-place. "Ah! the brigands are making off," he said. "They are going to work some other miracle. If only they do not attempt to set fire to the house, as they did last time, by way of a good-bye!"

For another half-hour or thereabouts Mlle. de Verneuil and d'Orgemont looked at each other, as each of them might have gazed at a picture. Then the gruff, coarse voice of Galope-Chopine called in a low tone, "There is no more danger now, M. d'Orgemont. My thirty crowns have been well earned this time!"

"My child," said the miser, "swear to me that you will shut your eyes."

Mlle. de Verneuil laid one of her hands over her eyelids; but for greater security, the old man blew out the lamp, took his liberatress by the hand, and assisted her to descend seven or eight steps in an awkward passage. After a few minutes, he gently drew down her hand, and she saw that she was in the miser's own room, which the Marquis of Montauran had just vacated.

"You can go now, my dear child," said the miser. "Do not look about you in that way. You have no money, of course. See, here are ten crowns; clipped ones, but still they will pass. When you are out of the garden, you will find a footpath which leads to the town, or the district, as they call it nowadays. But as the Chouans are at Fougères, it is not to be supposed that you could return thither at once; so you may stand in need of a safe asylum. Do not forget what I am going to tell you, and only take advantage of it in dire necessity. You will see a farmhouse beside the road which runs through the dale of Gibarry to the Nid-aux-

Crocs. Big Cibot (called Galope-Chopine) lives there. Go inside, and say to his wife, 'Good-day, Bécanière!' and Barbette will hide you. If Galope-Chopine should find you out, he will take you for a ghost, if it is night; and if it is broad daylight, ten crowns will mollify him. Good-bye! Our accounts are squared. . . . If you liked," he added, with a wave of the hand, that indicated the fields that lay round about his house, "all that should be yours!"

Mlle. de Verneuil gave a grateful glance at this strange being, and succeeded in wringing a sigh from him, with several distinct tones in it.

"You will pay me back my ten crowns, of course; I say nothing about interest, as you note. You can pay them to the credit of my account, to Master Patrat, the notary in Fougères, who, if you should wish it, would draw up our marriage-contract. Fair treasure! Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said she, with a smile, as she waved her hand to him.

"If you require any money," he called to her, "I will lend it to you at five per cent! Yes, only five. . . . Did I say five?" But she had gone.

"She looks to me like a good sort of girl," d'Orgemont continued; "but for all that, I shall make a change in the secret contrivance in my chimney."

Then he took a loaf that weighed twelve pounds, and a ham, and returned to his hiding-place.

As Mlle. de Verneuil walked in the open country, she felt as though life had begun anew. The chilly morning air against her face revived her, after so many hours during which she had encountered a close atmosphere. She tried to find the footpath that the miser had described; but after the setting of the moon, the darkness grew so dense, that she was compelled to go as chance determined. Very soon the dread of falling over a precipice took possession of her, and this saved her life, for she suddenly stopped with a presentiment that if she went a step further she should find no earth beneath her feet. A breath of yet colder wind which

played in her hair, the murmur of streams, and her own instinct, told her that she had come to the brink of the crags of St. Sulpice. She cast her arms about a tree, and waited in keen anxiety for the dawn, for she heard sounds of armed men, human voices, and the trampling of horses. She felt thankful to the darkness which was preserving her from the peril of falling into the hands of the Chouans, if, as the miser had told her, they were surrounding Fougères.

A faint purple light, like the beacon-fires lighted at night as the signal of Liberty, passed over the mountain tops; but the lower slopes retained their cold bluish tints in contrast with the dewy mists that drifted over the valleys. Very soon a disc of ruby red rose slowly on the horizon, the skies felt its influence, the ups and downs of the landscape, the spire of St. Leonard's church, the crags and the meadows hidden in deep shadow gradually began to appear, the trees perched upon the heights stood out against the fires of dawn. With a sudden gracious start the sun unwound himself from the streamers of fiery red, of yellow and sapphire, that surrounded him. The brilliant light united one sloping hillside to another by its level beams, and overflowed valley after valley. The shadows fled away, and all nature was overwhelmed with daylight. The air trembled with a fresh breeze, the birds sang, and everything awoke to life again.

But the young girl had barely had sufficient time to look down over the main features of this wonderful landscape, when by a frequently recurring phenomenon in these cool parts of the world the mists arose and spread themselves in sheets, filling the valleys, and creeping up the slopes of the highest hills, concealing this fertile basin under a cloak like snow. Very soon Mlle. de Verneuil could have believed that she beheld a view of a *mer de glace,* such as the Alps furnish. Then this atmosphere of cloud surged like the waves of the sea, flinging up opaque billows which softly poised themselves, swayed or eddied violently, caught bright rosy hues from the shafts of sunlight, or showed themselves translucent here and there as a lake of liquid silver. Sud-

denly the north wind blew upon this phantasmagoria, and dispelled the mists, which left a rusty dew on the sward.

Mlle. de Verneuil could then see a huge brown patch, situated on the rocks of Fougères—seven or eight hundred armed Chouans were hurrying about in the suburb of St. Sulpice, like ants on an ant hill. The immediate neighborhood of the castle was being furiously attacked by three thousand men who were stationed there, and who seemed to have sprung up by magic. The sleeping town would have yielded, despite its venerable ramparts and hoary old towers, if Hulot had not been on the watch. A concealed battery on a height, in the midst of the hollow basin formed by the ramparts, answered the Chouans' first volley, taking them in flank upon the road that led to the castle. The grape-shot cleared the road and swept it clean. Then a company made a sortie from the St. Sulpice gate, took advantage of the Chouans' surprise, drew themselves up upon the road, and opened a deadly fire upon them. The Chouans did not attempt to resist when they saw the ramparts covered with soldiers, as if the art of the engineer had suddenly traced blue lines about them, while the fire from the fortress covered that of the Republican sharpshooters.

Other Chouans, however, had made themselves masters of the little valley of the Nançon, had climbed the rocky galleries, and reached the promenade, to which they mounted till it was covered with goatskins, which made it look like the time-embrowned thatch of a hovel. Loud reports were heard at that very moment from the quarter of the town that overlooks the Couësnon valley. Fougères was clearly surrounded, and attacked at all points. A fire which showed itself on the eastern side of the rock showed that the Chouans were even burning the suburbs; but the flakes of fire that sprang up from the shingle roofs or the broom-thatch soon ceased, and a few columns of dark smoke showed that the conflagration was extinguished.

Black and brown clouds once more hid the scene from Mlle. de Verneuil, but the wind soon cleared away the smoke of

the powder. The Republican commandant had already changed the direction of his guns, so that they could bear successively upon the length of the valley of the Nançon, upon the Queen's Staircase, and the rock itself, when from the highest point of the promenade he had seen his first orders admirably carried out. Two guns by the guard-house of St. Leonard's Gate were mowing down the ant-like swarms of Chouans who had seized that position, while the National Guard of Fougères, precipitating themselves into the square by the church, were completing the defeat of the enemy. The affair did not last half an hour, and did not cost the Blues a hundred men. The Chouans, discomfited and defeated, were drawing off already in all directions, in obedience to repeated orders from the Gars, whose bold stroke had come to nothing (though he did not know this) in consequence of the affair at the Vivetière, which has brought back Hulot in secret, to Fougères. The artillery had only arrived there during this very night; for the mere rumor that ammunition was being transported thither would have sufficed to make Montauran desist from an enterprise, which, if undertaken, could only have a disastrous result.

As a matter of fact, Hulot had as much desire to give a severe lesson to the Gars as the Gars could have had to gain a success, in the moment he had selected, to influence the determinations of the First Consul. At the first cannon-shot the Marquis knew that it would be madness to carry this failure of a surprise any further from motives of vanity. So, to prevent a useless slaughter of his Chouans, he hastened to send out seven or eight messengers bearing orders to operate a prompt retreat at every point. The commandant, seeing his antagonist with a number of advisers about him, of whom Mme. du Gua was one, tried to send a volley over to them upon the rocks of St. Sulpice, but the place had been selected too cleverly for the young chief not to be in security. Hulot changed his tactics all at once from the defensive to the aggressive. At the first movements which revealed the intentions of the Marquis, the company which

was posted beneath the walls of the castle set themselves to work to cut off the Chouans' retreat by seizing the outlets at the upper end of the Nançon valley.

In spite of her animosity, Mlle. de Verneuil's sympathies were with the side on which her lover commanded. She turned quickly to see if the passage was free at the lower end. But she saw the Blues, who had no doubt been victorious on the other side of Fougères, returning from the Couësnon valley, through the dale of Gibarry, so as to seize the Nid-aux-Crocs, and that portion of the crags of St. Sulpice where the lower exits from the Nançon valley were situated. The Chouans, thus shut up in the narrow space of meadow at the bottom of the ravine, seemed certain to be cut off to a man; so accurately had the old Republican commandant foreseen the event, and so skilfully had he laid his plans. But the cannon, which had done Hulot such good service, were powerless upon either point. A desperate struggle began, and the town of Fougères once safe, the affair assumed the character of an engagement to which the Chouans were accustomed.

Then Mlle. de Verneuil understood the presence of the large bodies of men which she had come upon in the open country, the meeting of the chiefs in d'Orgemont's house, and all the occurrences of the previous night, and was unable to account for her escape from so many perils. This enterprise, suggested by despair, had so keen an interest for her, that she stood motionless, watching the moving pictures that spread themselves beneath her eyes. The fighting that went on at the foot of the hills of St. Sulpice soon had yet another interest for her. When the Marquis and his friends saw that the Chouans were almost at the mercy of the Blues, they rushed to their assistance down the Nançon valley. The foot of the crags was covered with a crowd, composed of furious groups who were fighting out the issues of life and death—both the weapons and the ground being in favor of the goatskins. Imperceptibly the shifting battlefield expanded its limits. The Chouans scattered themselves and

gained possession of the rocks, thanks to the help of the shrubs which grew here and there. A little later Mlle. de Verneuil was startled by the sight of her foes once more upon the summits, where they strenuously defended the perilous footpaths by which they had come.

As every passage on the hill was now in the possession of one side or the other, she was afraid of finding herself in among them. She left the great tree behind which she had been standing, and took to flight, meaning to take advantage of the old miser's advice. After she had hastened for some time along the slope of the hills of St. Sulpice which overlooks the main valley of the Couësnon, she saw a cow-shed in the distance, and concluded that it must be one of the outbuildings about Galope-Chopine's house, and that he must have left his wife by herself while the fighting went forward. Encouraged by these conjectures, Mlle. de Verneuil hoped to be well received in the dwelling, and to be allowed to spend a few hours there, until it should be possible to return to Fougères without danger. To all appearance, Hulot would gain the day. The Chouans were flying rapidly, so that she heard gunshots all about her, and the fear of being struck by a stray ball led her to reach the cottage, whose chimney served as a landmark, without delay. The path which she followed led to a sort of cart-shed. Its roof, thatched with broom, was supported by the trunks of four great trees which still retained their bark. There was a wall of daub and wattle at the back of it. In the shed itself there was a cider-press, a threshing-floor for buckwheat, and some ploughing apparatus. She stopped short beside one of the posts, hesitating to cross the miry swamp, that did duty for a yard before this house, which afar off, she, like a true Parisian, had taken for a cow-shed.

The cabin, sheltered from the blasts of the north wind by a knoll that rose above its roof, and against which it was built, was not destitute of a certain poetry of its own, for saplings and heather and rock-flowers hung in wreaths and garlands about it. A rustic staircase contrived between the

shed and the house allowed its inmates to ascend the heights of the knoll to breathe the fresh air. To the left of the cabin the knoll fell away abruptly, so that a succession of fields was visible, the first of which belonged in all probability to this farm. A border of pleasant copse wood ran round these fields, which were separated by banks of earth, upon which trees had been planted. The nearest field completely surrounded the yard. The way thither was closed by the huge half-rotten trunk of a tree, a barrier peculiar to Brittany, called by a name, which later on will furnish a final digression on the characteristics of the country. Between the staircase that had been cut in the rock, and the track which was closed by the great log, and beneath the overhanging rocks, stood the cottage, with the swamp before it. The four corners of the hovel were built of roughly hewn blocks of granite, laid one over another, thus maintaining the wretched walls in position. These were built up of a mixture of earthen bricks, beams of wood, and flintstones. Half of the roof was covered with broom, in the place of straw thatch, and the other half with shingles, or narrow boards cut in the shape of roofing slates, showing that the house consisted of two parts; and as a matter of fact, one part, divided off by a crazy hurdle, served as a byre, while the owners lived in the other division.

Owing to the near vicinity of the town, there were improvements about this cabin which would be completely lacking anywhere two leagues further away; and yet it showed very plainly the insecure condition of life to which wars and feudal customs had so rigorously subjected the habits of the serf, that even to-day many of the peasants in these parts still call the château in which their landlords dwell, the House.

Mlle. de Verneuil studied the place with an amazement that can readily be imagined, and at last she noticed a broken block of granite here and there in the mire of the yard, arranged to afford a method of access to the dwelling, not unattended with danger. But, hearing the sounds of musketry

drawing appreciably nearer, she sprang from stone to stone, as if she were crossing a river, to ask for shelter. Entrance to the house was barred by one of those doors that are made in two separate pieces; the lower part being of solid and substantial timber, while the upper portion was protected by a shutter, which served as a window. Shop-doors in certain little towns in France are often made on this model, but they are much more elaborate, and the lower portion is supplied with an alarm bell. The lower half of this particular door was opened by unfastening a wooden latchet worthy of the Golden Age, while the upper part was only closed during the night, since the daylight entered the room through no other opening. A rough sort of window certainly existed, but the panes were like bottle ends, and the massive leaden frames which supported them took up so much room, that the window seemed to be intended rather to intercept the light than to afford a passage to it.

As soon as Mlle. de Verneuil had made the door turn on its creaking hinges, she encountered an alarming ammoniacal odor which issued in whiffs from the cottage, and saw how the cattle had kicked to pieces the partition wall that divided them from the house-place. So the inside of the farmhouse (for such it was) was quite in keeping with the outside. Mlle. de Verneuil was asking herself how it was possible that human beings should live in such confirmed squalor, when a tiny ragged urchin, who seemed to be about eight or nine years old, suddenly showed a fresh pink and white face, plump cheeks, bright eyes, ivory teeth, and fair hair that fell in tangled locks over his half-naked shoulders. His limbs were sturdy, and in his attitude there was the charm of wonder, and the wild simplicity that makes a child's eyes grow larger. The little lad's beauty was of the heroic order.

"Where is your mother?" said Marie in a gentle tone, as she stooped down to kiss his eyes.

After receiving the kiss the child slipped away like an eel and disappeared behind a manure heap which lay between the path and the house, upon the slope of the knoll. Galope-

Chopine was wont, like many other Breton farmers (who have a system of agriculture peculiar to them), to pile manure in high situations; so that by the time they come to use it, the rain has washed all the goodness out of it.

Marie, being left in possession of the cabin for some minutes, quickly made an inventory of its contents. The whole house consisted of the one room in which she was waiting for Barbette. The most conspicuous and pretentious object was a vast fireplace, the mantelpiece being made out of a single slab of blue granite. The etymology of the word "mantelpiece" was made apparent by a scrap of green serge, bordered with pale-green ribbon, and scalloped at the edges, which was hanging along the slab, in the midst of which stood a colored plaster cast of the Virgin. On the base of the statuette, Mlle. de Verneuil read a couple of lines of religious poetry which are very widely popular in the district:

> Protectress of this place am I,
> The Mother of God who dwells on high.

Behind the Virgin there was a frightful picture splashed over with red and blue, a pretence of a painting that represented St. Labre. A bed covered with green serge, of the kind called tomb-shaped, a clumsy cradle, a wheel, some rough chairs, and a carved dresser, fitted up with a few utensils, almost completed the list of Galope-Chopine's furniture. Before the window there was a long table and a couple of benches made of chestnut wood; the light that fell through the panes of glass gave them the deep hues of old mahogany. Beneath the bung-hole of a great hogshead of cider Mlle. de Verneuil noticed a patch of moist yellowish thick deposit. The dampness was corroding the floor, although it was made of blocks of granite set in red clay, and proved that the master of the abode had come honestly by his Chouan nickname.*

Mlle. de Verneuil raised her eyes to avoid this sight, and

* Galope-Chopine, literally, Toss-pot.—Translator's note.

it seemed to her forthwith that she had seen all the bats in the world—so numerous were the spiders' webs that hung from the beams. Two huge pitchers, filled with cider, were standing on the long table. These utensils are a sort of brown earthenware jug of a pattern which is still in use in several districts in France, and which a Parisian can imagine for himself by thinking of the pots in which epicures serve Brittany butter; but the body of the jug is rounder, the glaze is unevenly distributed, and shaded over with brown splashes, like certain shells. The pitcher ends in a mouth of a kind not unlike the head of a frog thrust out above the water to take the air. The two pitchers had attracted Marie's attention last of all; but the sound of the fight grew more and more distinct, and compelled her to look about for a suitable hiding-place without waiting for Barbette, when the latter suddenly appeared.

"Good-day, Bécanière," she said, repressing an involuntary smile at the sight of a face that rather resembled the heads which architects set, by way of ornament, in the centres of window arches.

"Aha! you come from d'Orgemont," answered Barbette with no particular eagerness.

"Where will you put me? For the Chouans are here——"

"There!" said Barbette, as much at a loss at the sight of the beauty as well as of the eccentric attire of a being whom she did not venture to include among her own sex. "There! In the priest's hole!"

She took her to the head of the bed, and put her between it and the wall; but both of them were thunderstruck just then, for they thought they could hear strange footsteps hurrying through the swamp. Barbette had scarcely time to draw one of the bed-curtains and to huddle Marie in it before she found herself face to face with a fugitive Chouan.

"Good-wife, where can one hide here? I am the Comte de Bauvan."

Mlle. de Verneuil trembled as she recognized the voice of the dinner-guest, who had spoken the few words (still a

mystery for her) which had brought about the catastrophe at the Vivetière.

"Alas! monseigneur, you see there is nothing here! The best thing I can do is to go; but I will watch, and if the Blues are coming I will give you warning. If I were to stop here, and they found me with you, they would burn my house down."

So Barbette went out, for she had not wit enough to reconcile the opposing claims of two foes, each of whom had an equal right to the hiding-place, by virtue of the double part her husband was playing.

"I have two shots to fire," said the Count despairingly, "but they have gone past me already. Pshaw! I should be unlucky, indeed, if the fancy were to take them to look under the bed as they come back.

He gently leant his gun against the bed-post, beside which Marie stood wrapped about with the green serge curtain. Then he stooped down to make quite sure that he could creep under the bed. He could not have failed to see the feet of the other refugee, who in the desperation of the moment snatched up his gun, sprang quickly out into the room, and threatened the Count with it. A peal of laughter broke from him, however, as he recognized her; for, in order to hide herself, Marie had taken off her enormous Chouan hat, and thick locks of her hair were escaping from beneath a sort of net of lace.

"Do not laugh, Count; you are my prisoner. If you make any movement, you shall know what an incensed woman is capable of."

Just as the Count and Marie were looking at each other with widely different feelings, confused voices were shouting among the rocks, "Save the Gars! Scatter yourselves! Save the Gars! Scatter yourselves!"

Barbette's voice rose above the uproar without, and was heard by the two foes inside the cottage with very different sensations, for she was speaking less to her own son than to them.

"Don't you see the Blues?" Barbette cried tartly. "Come here, you naughty little lad, or I will go after you! Do you want to get shot? Come, run away quickly."

While all these small events were rapidly taking place, a Blue dashed into the swamp.

"Beau-Pied!" called Mlle. de Verneuil.

At the sound of her voice Beau-Pied ran up and took a somewhat better aim at the Count than his liberatress had done.

"Aristocrat," said the waggish soldier, "do not stir, or I will bring you down like the Bastille, in a brace of shakes."

"Monsieur Beau-Pied," said Mlle. de Verneuil in persuasive tones, "you are answerable to me for this prisoner. Do it in your own way, but you must deliver him over to me at Fougères safe and sound."

"Enough, madame!"

"Is the way to Fougères clear by now?"

"It is safe, unless the Chouans come to life again."

Mlle. de Verneuil cheerfully equipped herself with the light fowling-piece, gave her prisoner an ironical smile as she remarked, "Good-bye, Monsieur le Comte, we shall meet again!" and went swiftly up the pathway, after putting on her great hat again.

"I am learning a little too late," said the Comte de Bauvan bitterly, "that one should never jest concerning the honor of women who have none left."

"Aristocrat," cried Beau-Pied with asperity, "say nothing against that beautiful lady, if you do not wish me to send you to your *ci-devant* paradise."

Mlle. de Verneuil returned to Fougères by the paths which connect the crags of St. Sulpice with the Nid-aux-Crocs. When she reached these latter heights and hastened along the winding track which had been beaten out over the rough surface of the granite, she admired the lovely little Nançon valley, but lately so full of tumult, now so absolutely peaceful. Seen from that point of view, the glen looked like a green alley. Mlle. de Verneuil returned by way of St. Leonard's Gate, where the narrow path comes to an end.

The townspeople were still in anxiety about the struggle; which, judging by the firing that they heard in the distance, seemed likely to last through the day. They were awaiting the return of the National Guard to know the full extent of their losses. When this girl appeared in her grotesque costume, with her hair disheveled, a gun in her hand, her dress and shawl drenched with dew, soiled by contact with walls, and stained with mud, the curiosity of the people of Fougères was all the more vividly excited since the authority, beauty, and eccentricity of the fair Parisian already furnished the stock subject of their conversation.

Francine had sat up all night waiting for her mistress, a prey to horrible misgivings, so that on her return she wished to talk, but silence was enjoined upon her by a friendly gesture.

"I am not dead, child," said Marie. "Ah! when I left Paris I longed for emotions—and I have had them," she added after a pause. Francine went out to order a meal, remarking to her mistress that she must be in great need of it.

"Oh, no," said Mlle. de Verneuil, "but a bath, a bath! The toilet before everything else."

It was with no small degree of astonishment that Francine heard her mistress asking for the most fashionable and elegant dresses that had been packed for her.

After her breakfast, Marie made her toilette with all the minute care and attention that a woman devotes to this most important operation, when she is to appear before the eyes of her beloved in the midst of a ballroom. Francine could not account in any way for her mistress' mocking gaiety. There was none of the joy of love in it—no woman can make a mistake as to that expression—there was an ill-omened and concentrated malice about her. With her own hands Marie arranged the curtains about the windows, through which her eyes beheld a magnificent view. Then she drew the sofa nearer to the fire, set it in a light favorable to her face, and bade Francine bring flowers, so as to impart a festival ap-

pearance to the room. When Francine had brought the flowers, Marie superintended her arrangement of them to the best advantage. After casting a final glance of satisfaction round her apartment, she ordered Francine to send some one to demand her prisoner of the commandant.

She lay back luxuriously upon the sofa, partly to rest herself, and partly in order to assume a graceful and languid pose, which in certain women exerts an irresistible fascination. There was an indolent softness about her; the tips of her feet scarcely escaped from beneath the folds of her dress in a provoking manner; the negligence of her attitude, the bend of her neck—everything, down to the curves of her slender fingers that drooped over a cushion like the bells of a spray of jessamine, was in unison with her glances, and possessed an attractive influence. She burned perfumes so that the air was permeated with the sweet fragrance that acts so powerfully on the nerves, and frequently prepares the way for conquests which women desire to make without any advance on their part. A few moments later the heavy tread of the old commandant was heard in the ante-chamber.

"Well, commandant, where is my captive?"

"I have just ordered out a picket of a dozen men to shoot him, as he was taken with arms in his hands."

"You have disposed of my prisoner!" said she. "Listen, commandant. If I read your countenance rightly, there can be no great satisfaction for you in the death of a man after the engagement is over. Very well, then; give me back my Chouan, and grant him a reprieve. I will take the responsibility upon myself. I must inform you that this aristocrat has become indispensable to me, and with his co-operation our projects will be accomplished. Moreover, it would be as ridiculous to shoot this amateur Chouan as to fire on a balloon, for the prick of a pin is all that is needed to bring about its entire collapse. Leave butchery to the aristocrats, for heaven's sake. Republics should show themselves to be magnanimous. Would not you yourself have granted an amnesty to the victims at Quiberon and to many others?

Now, then, send your dozen men to make the rounds, and come and dine with me and my prisoner. There is only an hour of daylight left, and you see," she added, smiling, "that if you delay, my toilette will lose all its effect."

"But, mademoiselle——" said the astonished commandant.

"Well, what is it? I understand you. Come, the Count will not escape you. Sooner or later the portly butterfly yonder will scorch himself beneath the fire of your platoons."

The commandant slightly shrugged his shoulders, like a man who is compelled to submit, against his own judgment, to the whims of a pretty woman. He returned in the space of half an hour, followed by the Comte de Bauvan.

Mlle. de Verneuil made as though her two guests had taken her by surprise, and appeared to be in some confusion at being detected by the Count in so careless an attitude; but when she had seen, from that gentleman's eyes, that a first effect had been produced upon him, she rose and gave her whole attention to her visitors with perfect politeness and grace. There was nothing either constrained or studied in her attitude, in her smile, her voice or her manner, nothing that betrayed a premeditated design. Everything about her was in agreement; there was no touch of exaggeration which could give an impression that she was assuming the manners of a world with which she was not familiar.

When the Royalist and the Republican were both seated, she looked at the Count with an expression of severity. The nobleman understood women sufficiently well to know that the affront that he had offered to her was like to be his own death-warrant. But in spite of this misgiving, and without showing either melancholy or levity, he behaved like a man who did not look for such a sudden catastrophe. It soon appeared to him that there was something ridiculous about fearing death in the presence of a pretty woman, and Marie's severe looks had put some ideas into his head.

"Eh!" thought he. "Who knows whether a Count's cor-

onet still to be had will not please her better than the coronet of a Marquis which has been lost? Montauran is as hard as a nail, while I——" and he looked complacently at himself. "At any rate, if I saved my life, that is the least that may come of it."

These diplomatic reflections were all to no purpose. The *penchant* which the Count intended to feign for Mlle. de Verneuil became a violent fancy, which that dangerous being was pleased to encourage.

"You are my prisoner, Count," she said, "and I have the right to dispose of you. Your execution will only take place with my consent; and I have too much curiosity to allow you to be shot at once."

"And suppose that I maintain an obstinate silence?" he answered merrily.

"With an honest woman perhaps you might, but with a light one! Come now, Count, that is impossible."

These words, full of bitter irony, were hissed at him "from so sharp a whistle" (to quote Sully's remark concerning the Duchess of Beaufort), that the astonished noble could find nothing better to do than to gaze at his cruel opponent.

"Stay," she went on with a satirical smile, "not to gainsay you, I will be a 'good girl,' like one of those creatures. Here is your gun, to begin with," and she held out his weapon to him with mock amiability.

"On the faith of a gentleman, mademoiselle, you are doing——"

"Ah!" she broke in, "I have had enough of 'the faith of a gentleman!' On that security I set foot in the Vivetière. Your chief swore that I and mine should be in safety——"

"What infamy!" exclaimed Hulot with a scowl.

"It is the Count here who is to blame," she said, addressing Hulot, and indicating the noble. "The Gars certainly intended to keep his word; but this gentleman put some slander or other in circulation, which confirmed the stories which it had pleased Charette's Filly to imagine about me."

"Mademoiselle," said the Count in dire distress, with the

axe hanging over him, "I will swear that I said nothing but the truth——"

"And what did you say?"

"That you had been the——"

"Speak out! The mistress?"

"Of the Marquis of Lenoncourt, the present Duke, and a friend of mine," the Count made answer.

"Now, I might let you go to your death," said Marie, who was apparently unmoved by the Count's circumstantial accusation. The indifference, real or feigned, with which she regarded its opprobrium amazed the Count. "But," she continued, laughing, "you can dismiss for ever the ominous vision of those leaden pellets, for you have no more given offence to me than to that friend of yours to whom you are pleased to assign me as—fie on you! Listen to me, Count, did you never visit my father, the Duc de Verneuil?—Very well then——"

Considering, doubtless, that the confidence which she was about to make was so important that Hulot must be excluded from it, Mlle. de Verneuil beckoned the Count to her, and whispered a few words in his ear. A stifled exclamation of surprise broke from M. de Bauvan; he looked at Marie in a bewildered fashion; she was leaning quietly against the chimney-piece, and the childish simplicity of her attitude suddenly brought back the whole of the memory which she had partially called up. The Count fell on one knee.

"Mademoiselle," he cried, "I entreat you to grant my pardon, although I may not deserve it."

"I have nothing to forgive," she said. "You are as irrational now in your repentance as you were in your insolent conjectures at the Vivetière. But these mysteries are above your intelligence. Only," she added gravely, "you must know this, Count, that the daughter of the Duc de Verneuil has too much magnanimity not to feel a lively interest in your fortunes."

"Even after an insult?" said the Count, with a sort of remorse.

"Are there not some who dwell so high that they are above the reach of insult? I am of their number, Count."

The dignity and pride in the girl's bearing as she uttered these words impressed her prisoner, and made this affair considerably more obscure for Hulot. The commandant's hand traveled to his moustache, as though to turn it up at the ends, while he looked on uneasily. Mlle. de Verneuil gave him a significant glance, as if to assure him that she was not deviating from her plan.

"Now, let us have some talk," she went on, after a pause. "Bring us some lights, Francine, my girl."

Skilfully she turned the conversation on the times, which, in the space of so few years, had come to be the *ancien régime*. She carried the Count back to those days so thoroughly, by the keenness of her observations and the vivid pictures she called up; she gave him so many opportunities of displaying his wit, by conducting her own replies with dexterous and gracious tact, that the Count ended by making the discovery that never before had he been so agreeable. He grew young again at the thought, and endeavored to communicate his own good opinion of himself to this attractive young person. The mischievous girl amused herself by trying all her arts of coquetry upon the Count, doing this all the more dexterously, because, for her, it was only a game. Sometimes she led him to believe that he was making rapid progress in her regard; sometimes she appeared to be taken aback by the warmth of her own feelings; and displayed, in consequence, a reserve that fascinated the Count, and which visibly helped to fan his extemporized flame. She behaved exactly like an angler who lifts his rod from time to time to see if the fish is nibbling at the bait. The poor Count allowed himself to be caught by the innocent way in which his deliverers received two or three rather neatly turned compliments. Emigration, the Republic, and the Chouans were a thousand leagues away from his thoughts.

Hulot sat bolt upright, motionless and pensive as the god Terminus. His want of education made him totally unapt

at this kind of conversation. He had a strong suspicion that the two speakers must be a very witty pair; but the efforts of his own intellect were confined to ascertaining that their ambiguous words contained no plotting against the Republic.

"Montauran, mademoiselle," the Count was saying, "is well born and well bred; he is a pretty fellow enough; but he understands nothing of gallantry. He is too young to have seen Versailles. His education has been deficient; he does not play off one shrewd turn with another; he gives a stab with the knife instead. He can fall violently in love, but he will never attain to that fine flower of manner which distinguished Lauzun, Adhémar, Coigny, and so many others. He has no idea of the agreeable art of saying to women those pretty nothings, which are better suited to them, after all, than outbursts of passion, which they very soon find wearisome. Yes, although he may have made conquests, he has neither grace nor ease of manner."

"I saw that clearly," Marie replied.

"Ah!" said the Count to himself, "there was a note in her voice and a look that shows that it will not be long before I am on the best of terms with her; and faith! I will believe anything she wishes me to believe, in order to be hers."

Dinner was served; he offered his arm. Mlle. de Verneuil did her part as hostess with a politeness and tact which could only have been acquired by an education received in the exclusive life of a court.

"Leave us," she said to Hulot, as they left the table, "he is afraid of you; while, if I am left alone with him, I shall very soon learn everything that I wish to know; he has reached the point when a man tells me everything that he thinks, and sees things only through my eyes."

"And after that?" asked the commandant, who seemed thus to reassert his claim to the prisoner.

"Oh! he will go free," she said, "free as the air."

"But he was taken with arms in his hands——"

"No, he was not," said she, "for I had disarmed him." a jesting sophistry such as women love to oppose to sound but arbitrary reasoning.

"Count," she said, as she came in again, "I have just obtained your freedom; but nothing for nothing!" she went on, smiling, and turning her head questioningly to one side.

"Ask everything of me that you will, even my name and my honor!" he cried, in his intoxication, "I lay it all at your feet." And he came near to seize her hand, in his endeavor to impose his desires upon her as gratitude, but Mlle. de Verneuil was not a girl to make a mistake of this kind. So, while she smiled upon this new lover, so as to give him hope:

"Will you make me repent of my confidence in you?" she said, drawing back a step or two.

"A girl's imagination runs faster than a woman's," he answered, laughing.

"A girl has more to lose than a woman."

"True, if one carries a treasure, one must needs be suspicious."

"Let us leave this kind of talk," she answered, "and speak seriously. You are giving a ball at Saint James. I have heard that you have established your magazines there, and your arsenals, and made it the seat of your government. When is the ball?"

"To-morrow night."

"It will not astonish you, sir, that a slandered woman should wish, with feminine persistency, to obtain a signal reparation for the insults to which she has been subjected, and this in the presence of those who witnessed them. So I will go to your ball. What I ask of you is to grant me your protection from the moment of my arrival to the moment of my departure. I do not want your word for it," she said, seeing that he laid his hand on his heart. "I hold vows in abhorrence; they seem to me too like precautions. Simply tell me that you undertake to secure me against any infamous and criminal attempts upon my person. Promise to repair your own error by giving out everywhere that I am really the daughter of the Duc de Verneuil; keeping silence, at the same time, about the misfortunes which I owe to the

lack of a father's protecting care; and then we shall be quits. Eh! Can a couple of hours' protection extended to a woman in a ballroom be too heavy a ransom? Come, come, you are not worth a penny more than that," and a smile deprived her words of any bitterness.

"What will you demand for my gun?" laughed the Count.

"Oh! more than I do for you yourself."

"What is it?"

"Secrecy. Believe me, Bauvan, only a woman can read another woman. I am positive that if you breathe a word of this, I may lose my life on the way thither. One or two balls yesterday warned me of the risks which I must encounter on the journey. Oh! that lady is as expert with a rifle as she is dexterous in assisting at the toilet. No waiting-women ever undressed me so quickly. Pray manage things so that I may have nothing of that kind to fear at the ball."

"You will be under my protection," the Count replied proudly. "But perhaps it is for Montauran's sake that you are coming to Saint James?"

"You wish to know more than I do myself," she said, laughing. "You must go, now," she added, after a pause. "I myself will be your conductor until you are out of the town, for you have made the war one of cannibals, here."

"But you take some interest in me," cried the Count. "Ah! mademoiselle, allow me to hope that you will not be insensible to my friendship; for I must be content with that, must I not?" he added, with the air of a coxcomb.

"Come now, conjurer!" she said, with the blithe expression that a woman can assume when she makes an admission that neither betrays her real feelings nor compromises her dignity. She put on her pelisse, and went with the Count as far as the Nid-aux-Crocs. When they reached the beginning of the footpath, she said:

"Maintain an absolute reserve, sir, even with the Marquis," and she laid a finger on her lips. The Count, emboldened by Mlle. de Verneuil's graciousness, took her hand; she

suffered him to do so, like one who grants a great privilege, and he kissed it tenderly.

"Oh, mademoiselle," he cried, when he saw that he was quite out of danger, "you can reckon upon me through life and death! Since I owe you a debt of gratitude almost as great as that which I owe to my own mother, it will be very hard to feel nothing more than esteem for you."

He sprang down the pathway. Marie watched him as he scaled the crags of St. Sulpice, and nodded approvingly, as she murmured to herself:

"That fine fellow yonder has paid me for his life more than the worth of his life. I could make him my creature at a very small cost! A creature and a creator! There lies the whole difference between one man and another!" She went no further with her thought. She gave a despairing look at the sky above her, and slowly returned to St. Leonard's Gate, where Hulot and Corentin were waiting for her.

"Yet two more days," she cried; then she checked herself, seeing that they were not alone, and whispered the rest in Hulot's ear—"and he shall drop down beneath your fire."

With a peculiar jocose expression not easy to describe, the commandant suddenly drew back a step and looked at the girl before him—there was not a shadow of remorse in her face or bearing. It is wonderful how women, generally speaking, never reason over their most blameworthy actions; they are led entirely by their feelings; there is a kind of sincerity in their very dissimulation, and only among women is crime dissociated from baseness; for, for the most part, they themselves do not know how the thing has come about.

"I am going to Saint James, to a ball given by the Chouans, and——"

"But that is five leagues away from here," Corentin put in. "Shall I escort you?"

"You are very much taken up," said she, "with something that I never think about at all—that is to say, yourself."

The contempt for Corentin which Marie had displayed was eminently gratifying to Hulot, who made his peculiar

grimace as he watched her disappear in the direction of St. Leonard. Corentin's eyes likewise followed her; but from his face it was evident that he suppressed the consciousness of a superior power which he thought to exercise over this charming woman's destiny; he meant so to control her by means of her passions that one day she should be his.

Mlle. de Verneuil, on her return, betook herself at once to considering her ball dress. Francine, quite accustomed to obedience, though she did not understand the ends which her mistress had in view, ransacked the trunks, and suggested a Greek costume. Everything at that time took its tone from ancient Greece. This toilette, which received Marie's approval, could be packed in a trunk that could easily be carried.

"I am setting out on a wild errand, Francine, child; think whether you would rather stay here or go with me?"

"Stay here!" cried Francine; "if I did, who would dress you?"

"Where have you put the glove that I gave you this morning?"

"Here it is!"

"Sew a bit of green ribbon upon it; and before all things, do not forget to take some money."

But when she saw that Francine had newly coined money in her hand, she exclaimed, "That in itself would be the death of us! Send Jeremiah to arouse Corentin. . . . No, the villain would follow us! It would be better to send to the commandant to ask him for some crowns of six francs each, for me."

Marie thought of everything down to the smallest detail, with a woman's foresight. While Francine completed the preparations for her incomprehensible journey, she occupied herself with trying to imitate the cry of the screech owl, and succeeded in imitating Marche-à-Terre's signal in a manner that baffled detection. At midnight she passed out through St. Leonard's Gate, reached the narrow footpath along the Nid-aux-Crocs; and, with Francine following her, she ven-

tured across the dale of Gibarry: She walked with a firm step; for so strong a will as that which stirred within her invests the body and its movements with an indescribable quality of power. For women, the problem how to leave a ballroom without catching a cold is of no small importance; but when their hearts are once possessed by passion, their frames might be made of iron. Even a bold man would have hesitated over such an enterprise; but scarcely had Mlle. de Verneuil begun to feel the attractions of the prospect, when its dangers became so many temptations for her.

"You are setting out without a prayer for God's protection," said Francine, who had turned to look at St. Leonard's spire.

The devout Breton girl stopped, clasped her hands, and said her *Ave* to St. Anne of Auray, beseeching her to prosper their journey, while her mistress stood waiting, deep in thought, gazing alternately at the childlike attitude of her maid, who was praying fervently, and at the effects of the misty moonlight, as it fell over the carved stone-work about the church, giving to the granite the look of delicate filagree.

In no long time the two women reached Galope-Chopine's cottage. Light as were the sounds of their footsteps, they aroused one of the huge dogs that, in Brittany, are intrusted with the safe-keeping of the door, a simple wooden latch being the only fastening in vogue. The dog made a rush at the two strangers, and his bark became so furious that they were compelled to retreat a few paces and to call for help. Nothing stirred, however. Mlle. de Verneuil gave the cry of the screech-owl, and then the rusty hinges of the cabin-door creaked loudly all at once, and Galope-Chopine, who had risen in haste, showed his gloomy countenance.

Marie held out Montauran's glove for the inspection of the warden of Fougères.

"I must go to Saint James at once," she said. "The Comte de Bauvan told me that I should find a guide and protector in you. So find two donkeys for us to ride, my

worthy Galope-Chopine, and prepare to come with us yourself. Time is valuable; for if we do not reach Saint James before to-morrow evening, we shall neither see the Gars nor the ball."

Galope-Chopine, utterly amazed, took the glove and turned it over and over. Then he lighted a candle made of resin, about the thickness of the little finger, and the color of gingerbread. This commodity had been imported from the north of Europe, and, like everything else in this strange land of Brittany, plainly showed the prevailing ignorance of the most elementary principles of commerce. When Galope-Chopine had seen the green ribbon, taken a look at Mlle. de Verneuil, scratched his ear, and emptied a pitcher of cider, after offering a glass to the fair lady, he left her seated upon the bench of polished chestnut wood before the table, and went in search of two donkeys.

The violet rays of the outlandish candle were hardly strong enough to outshine the fitful moonlight, that gave vague outlines in dots of light to the dark hues of the furniture, and to the floor of the smoke-begrimed hut. The little urchin had raised his pretty, wondering face; and up above his fair curls appeared the heads of two cows, their pink noses and great eyes shone through the holes in the wall of the byre. The big dog, whose head was by no means the least intelligent one in this family, seemed to contemplate the two strangers with a curiosity quite as great as that displayed by the child. A painter would have dwelt admiringly on the effect of this nightpiece, but Marie was not very eager to enter into conversation with the spectre-like Barbette, who was now sitting up in bed, and had begun to open her eyes very wide with recognition. Marie went out to avoid the pestiferous atmosphere of the hovel, and to escape the questions which the "Bécanière" was about to ask.

She tripped lightly up the flight of stairs cut in the rock which overhung Galope-Chopine's cottage, and thence admired the endless detail of the landscape before her, which underwent a change at every step, whether backwards or

forwards, towards the crests of the hills or down to the depths of the valleys. Moonlight was spreading like a luminous mist far and wide over the valley of the Couësnon. A woman who carried a burden of slighted love in her heart could not but experience the feeling of melancholy that this soft light produces in the soul—a light that lent fantastic outlines to the mountain forms, and traced out the lines of the streams in strange pale tints.

The silence was broken just then by the bray of the asses. Marie hurried down to the Chouan's cabin, and they set out at once. Galope-Chopine, armed with a double-barreled fowling-piece, wore a shaggy goatskin which gave him the appearance of a Robinson Crusoe. His wrinkled and blotched countenance was barely visible beneath his huge hat, an article of dress to which the peasants still cling, in pride at having obtained, after all their long ages of serfdom, a decoration sacred to the heads of their lords in times of yore. There was something patriarchal about the costume, attitude, and form of their guide and protector; the whole nocturnal procession resembled the picture of "The Flight into Egypt" which we owe to the sombre brush of Rembrandt. Galope-Chopine industriously avoided the highway, and led the two women through the vast labyrinth made by cross-country roads in Brittany.

By this time Mlle. de Verneuil understood the tactics of the Chouans in war. As she herself went over these tracks, she could form a more accurate notion of the nature of the country which had appeared so enchanting to her when she viewed it from the heights; a country presenting dangers and well-nigh hopeless difficulties, which must be experienced before any idea can be formed concerning them. The peasants, from time immemorial, have raised a bank of earth about each field, forming a flat-topped ridge, six feet in height, with beeches, oaks, and chestnut trees growing upon the summit. The ridge or mound, planted in this wise, is called "a hedge" (the kind of hedge they have in Normandy); and as the long branches of the trees which grow

upon it almost always project across the road, they make a great arbor overhead. The roads themselves, shut in by clay banks in this melancholy way, are not unlike the moats of fortresses; and whenever the granite, which is nearly always just beneath the surface in these districts, does not form an uneven natural pavement, the ways become so excessively heavy, that the lightest cart can only travel over them with the help of two yoke of oxen and a couple of horses; they are small horses, it is true, but generally strong. So chronic is the swampy state of the roads that, by dint of use and wont, a path called a *rote* has been beaten out for foot passengers along the side of the hedge in each field. The necessary transition from one field to another is effected by climbing a few steps cut in the bank sides, which are often slippery in wet weather.

The travelers found other obstacles in abundance to be surmounted in these winding lanes. Each separate piece of land, fortified in the way that has been described, possesses a gateway some ten feet wide, which is barred across by a contrivance called an *échalier* in the West. The *échalier* is either a trunk or a limb of a tree, with a hole drilled through one end of it, so that it can be set on another shapeless log of wood which serves, as it were, for a handle or pivot upon which the first piece is turned. The thick end of the *échalier* is so arranged as to project some distance behind this pivot, so that it can carry a heavy weight as a counterpoise, a device that enables a child to open and close this curious rustic gate. The further end of the tree trunk lies in a hollow fashioned on the inner side of the bank itself. Sometimes the peasants thriftily dispense with the stone counterpoise, and let the thick end of the trunk or limb of the tree hang further over instead. This kind of barrier varies with the taste of every farmer. Very often the *échalier* consists of one single branch of a tree, with either end ensconced in the earth of the bank. Often, again, it looks like a square gate, built up of many branches, set at intervals, as if the rungs of a ladder had been arranged crosswise. This kind of gate

turns about like an *échalier,* and the other end moves upon a little revolving disc.

These "hedges" and *échaliers* make the land look like a vast chessboard. Every field is a separate and distinct enclosure like a fortress, and each, like a fortress, is protected by a rampart. The gateways are readily defended, and, when stormed, afford a conquest fraught with many perils. The Breton has a fancy that fallow land is made fertile by growing huge bushes of broom upon it; so he encourages this shrub, which thrives upon the treatment it receives to such an extent that it soon reaches the height of a man. This superstition is not unworthy of a population capable of depositing their heaps of manure on the highest points of their fold yards; and in consequence, one-fourth of the whole area of the land is covered with thickets of broom, affording hiding-places without number for ambuscades. Scarcely a field is without its one or two cider-apple trees, whose low overhanging branches are fatal to the vegetation beneath. Imagine, therefore, how little of the field itself is left, when every hedge is planted with huge trees, whose greedy roots spread out over one-fourth of the space; and you will have some idea of the system of cultivation and general appearance of the country through which Mlle. de Verneuil was traveling.

It is not clear whether a desire to avoid disputes about landmarks, or the convenient and easy custom of shutting up cattle on the land with no one to look after them, brought about the construction of these redoubtable barriers—permanent obstacles which make the country impenetrable, and render a war with large bodies of troops quite impossible. When the nature of the land has been reviewed, step by step, the hopelessness of a struggle between regular and irregular troops is abundantly evident; for five hundred men can hold the country in the teeth of the troops of a kingdom. This was the whole secret of Chouan warfare.

Mlle. de Verneuil now understood how pressing was the necessity that the Republic should stamp out rebellion rather

by means of police and diplomacy than by futile efforts on the part of the military. As a matter of fact, what was it possible to effect against a people clever enough to despise the possession of their towns, while they secured the length and breadth of their land by such indestructible earthworks? And how do otherwise than negotiate, when the whole blind force of the peasants was concentrated in a wary and audacious chief? She admired the genius of the minister who had discovered the clue to a peace in the depths of his cabinet. She thought she had gained an insight into the nature of the considerations which sway men who have ability enough to see the condition of an empire at a glance. Their actions, which in the eyes of the crowd seem to be criminal, are but the partial manifestations of a single vast conception. There is about such awe-inspiring minds as these an unknown power which seems to belong half to chance and half to fate; a mysterious prophetic instinct within them beckons them, and they rise up suddenly; the common herd misses them for a moment from among its numbers, raises its eyes, and beholds them soaring on high. These thoughts seemed to justify, nay, to exalt Mlle. de Verneuil's longings for revenge, her hopes and the thoughts that wrought within her lent to her sufficient strength to endure the unwonted fatigues of her journey. At the boundary of every freehold Galope-Chopine was compelled to assist the two women to dismount, and to help them to scramble over the awkward interval, and when the *rotes* came to an end they were obliged to mount again and venture into the miry lanes which the approach of winter had already affected. The huge trees, the hollow ways, and the barriers in these low-lying meadows, all combined to shut in a damp atmosphere that surrounded the three travelers like an icy pall. After much painful fatigue they reached the woods of Marignay at sunrise. Their way became easier along a broad forest ride. The thick vault of branches overhead protected them from the weather, and they encountered no more of the difficulties which had hitherto impeded them.

They had scarcely gone a league through the forest, when they heard a confused far-off murmur of voices and the silvery sounds of a bell, ringing less monotonously than those which are shaken by the movements of cattle. Galope-Chopine hearkened to the soft sounds with keen attention. Very soon a gust of the breeze bore the words of a psalm to his ear. This seemed to produce a great effect upon him; he led the weary donkeys aside into a track which took the travelers away from the direct road to Saint James, turning a deaf ear to the remonstrances of Mlle. de Verneuil, whose uneasiness was increased by the gloomy condition of the place. Enormous blocks of granite, with the strangest outlines, lay to right and left of them, piled one above another. Huge serpent-like roots wandered over these rocks, seeking moisture and nourishment afar for some few venerable beeches. Both sides of the road looked like the huge caves which are famous for their stalactites. Ravines and cavern-mouths were hidden by festoons of ivy; the sombre green of the holly thickets mingled with the brackens and with green or grayish patches of moss. The travelers had not taken many steps along this narrow track when a most amazing scene suddenly spread itself before Mlle. de Verneuil's eyes, and explained Galope-Chopine's pertinacity.

A kind of cove rose before them, built up of huge masses of granite, forming a semi-circular amphitheatre. Tall dark firs and golden brown chestnut trees grew on its irregular tiers, which rose one above another, as in a great circus. The winter sun seemed not so much to throw its light as to pour a flood of pale colors over everything, and autumn had spread a warm brown carpet of dry leaves everywhere. In the very centre of this hall, which seemed to have had the Deluge for its architect, rose three giant Druidical stones, a great altar above which the banner of the church was set. Some hundred men, in fervent prayer, knelt, bareheaded, in this enclosure, where a priest, assisted by two other ecclesiastics, was saying mass. The poverty of the sacerdotal garb, the weak voice of the priest, which echoed like a murmur

in space, the crowd of men filled with conviction, united by one common feeling, bending before the undecorated altar and the bare crucifix, the sylvan austerity of the temple, the hour and the place, lent this scene an appearance of simplicity which must have characterized early Christian gatherings.

Mlle. de Verneuil stood still in admiring awe. She had never before seen or imagined anything like this mass said in the heart of the forest, this worship which persecution had driven back to its primitive conditions, this poetry of the days of yore brought into sharp contrast with the strange and wild aspects of nature, these kneeling Chouans, armed or unarmed, at once men and children—at once cruel and devout. She recollected how often she had marveled, in her childhood, at the pomps which this very Church of Rome has made so grateful to every sense; but she had never been brought thus face to face with the thought of God alone—His cross above the altar, His altar set on the bare earth; among the autumn woods that seemed to sustain the dome of the sky above, as the garlands of carved stone crown the archways of gothic cathedrals; while for the myriad colors of stained-glass windows, a few faint red gleams of sunlight and its duller reflections scarcely lighted up the altar, the priest, and his assistants.

The men before her were a fact, and not a system; this was a prayer, and not a theology. But the human passions which, thus restrained for a moment, had left the harmony of this picture undisturbed, soon reasserted themselves, and brought a powerful animation into the mysterious scene.

The gospel came to an end as Mlle. de Verneuil came up. She recognized, not without alarm, the Abbé Gudin in the officiating priest, and hastily screened herself from his observation behind a great fragment of granite, which made a hiding-place for her. She also drew Francine quickly behind it, but in vain did she endeavor to tear Galope-Chopine away from the post which he had chosen with a view to sharing in the benefits of the ceremony. She hoped to effect an

escape from the danger that threatened her when she saw that the nature of the ground would permit her to withdraw before all the rest of the congregation.

Through a large cleft in the rock she saw the Abbé Gudin take his stand upon a block of granite which served him for a pulpit, where he began his sermon with these words: *"In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus sancti."*

The whole congregation devoutly made the sign of the Cross as he spoke.

"My dear brethren," the Abbé then began, in a loud voice, "first of all let us pray for the dead: for Jean Cochegrue, Nicolas Laferté, Joseph Brouet, François Parquoi, Sulpice Coupiau, all of this parish, who died of the wounds which they received in the fight at La Pèlerine and in the siege of Fougères. . . . *De profundis,"* and the psalm was recited, as their custom was, by the priests and congregation, who repeated alternate verses with an enthusiasm that augured well for the success of the sermon. When the psalm for the dead was over, the Abbé Gudin went on again in tones that grew more and more vehement; for the old Jesuit was well aware that an emphatic style of address was the most convincing form of argument by which to persuade his uncivilized audience.

"These defenders of God, Christian brethren, have set example of your duty before you," said he. "Are you not ashamed of what they may be saying of you in Paradise? Were it not for those blessed souls, who must have been welcomed there by the saints with open arms, our Lord might well believe that your parish is the abode of heathen Mahometans! Do you know, my gars, what is said about you in Brittany, and what the King is told of you? . . . You do not know, is not that so? I will tell you. They say: 'What is this? Altars have been overthrown by the Blues; they have slain the rectors, they have murdered the King and Queen, they intend to take the men of every parish in Brittany, to make them Blues like themselves, and to send them away from their parishes to fight in far-off countries

where they run the risk of dying unshriven, and, therefore, of spending eternity in hell. And are the gars of Marignay, whose church has been burned down, waiting with their arms hanging by their sides? Oho! This accursed Republic has sold the goods of God and of the seigneurs by auction, and divided the price among the Blues; and in order to batten itself on money as it has battened on blood, the Republic has issued a decree which demands three livres out of every crown of six francs, just as it demands three men out of every six; and the men of Marignay have not taken up their weapons to drive the Blues out of Brittany? Aha! Paradise will be shut against them, and they will never save their souls!' This is what people are saying about you. It is your own salvation, Christians, that is at stake! You will save your souls in the struggle for your faith and your king. St. Anne of Auray appeared to me herself yesterday at half-past two. She told me then just what I am telling you now. 'Thou art a priest from Marignay?'—'Yes, madame, at your service.'—'Very good, I am St. Anne of Auray, aunt of God, as we reckon in Brittany. I dwell at Auray, and I am come hither also, to bid thee tell the gars of Marignay that there is no hope of salvation for them if they do not take up arms. So thou shalt refuse to absolve them from their sins unless they serve God. Thou shalt bless their guns, and those gars who shall be absolved from their sins shall never miss the Blues, for their guns shall be holy!' She disappeared beneath the Goose-foot oak, leaving an odor of incense behind. I marked the spot. There is a beautiful wooden Virgin there, set up by the *recteur* of Saint James. Moreover, the mother of Pierre Leroi, who is called Marche-à-Terre, having repaired thither in the evening to pray, has been healed of her sufferings through the good works wrought by her son. There she is in your midst; you can see her with your own eyes walking about without help from any one. It is a miracle, like the resurrection of the blessed Marie Lambrequin, wrought to prove to you that God will never forsake the cause of the Bretons so long as they fight for His servants and for the King.

"So, dear brethren, if you would save your souls and show yourselves to be defenders of our lord the King, you ought to obey him who has been sent to you by the King, and whom we call the Gars, in everything that he may command. Then you will no longer be like heathen Mahometans, and you will be found, with all the gars of all Brittany, beneath the banner of God. You can take back again, out of the Blues' pockets, all the money that they have stolen, for since your fields lie unsown while you go out to war, our Lord and the King make over to you all the spoils of your enemies. Christians, shall it be said of you that the gars of Marignay lag behind the gars of Morbihan, the gars of Saint-Georges, of Vitré or of Antrain, who are all in the service of God and the King? Will you allow them to take everything? Will you look on, like heretics, with folded arms, while so many Bretons are saving their own souls while they save their King? 'For Me, ye shall give up all things,' says the gospel. Have not we ourselves given up our tithes already? Give up everything to wage this sacred war! You shall be as the Maccabees, you will be pardoned at the last. You will find, in your midst, your rectors and your curés, and the victory will be yours! Christians, give heed to this!" said he as he drew to an end. "To-day is the only day on which we have the power of blessing your guns. Those who do not take advantage of this favor will never find the Blessed One of Auray so merciful at another time, and she will not hear them again, as she did in the last war."

This sermon, supported by the thunders of a powerful voice and by manifold gesticulations, which bathed the orator in perspiration, produced but little apparent affect. The peasants stood motionless as statues, with their eyes fixed on the speaker; but Mlle. de Verneuil soon saw clearly that this universal attitude was the result of a spell which the Abbé exerted over the crowd. Like all great actors, he had swayed his audience as one man, by appealing to their passions and to their interests. Was he not absolving them beforehand for any excesses that they might commit? Had he

not severed the few bonds that restrained these rough natures, and that kept them obedient to the precepts of religion and of social order? He had prostituted the priestly office to the uses of political intrigue; but in those revolutionary times, every one used such weapons as he possessed in the interests of his party, and the peace-bringing cross of Christ became an instrument of war, as did the ploughshare that produces man's daily bread.

Mlle. de Verneuil saw no one who could understand her thoughts, so she turned to look at Francine, and was not a little amazed to find that her maid was sharing in the general enthusiasm. She was devoutly telling her beads on Galope-Chopine's rosary; he, no doubt, had made it over to her during the course of the sermon.

"Francine," she murmured, "are you also afraid of being a 'heathen Mahometan'?"

"Oh! mademoiselle," answered the Breton girl, "only look at Pierre's mother over yonder, she is walking——"

There was such deep conviction in Francine's attitude, that Marie understood the secret spell of the sermon, the influence exercised by the clergy in the country, and the tremendous power of the scene which was just about to begin. Those peasants who stood nearest went up, one by one, kneeling as they offered their guns to the preacher, who laid them down upon the altar. Galope-Chopine lost no time in presenting himself with his old duck-gun.

The three priests chanted the hymn *Veni Creator,* while the officiating priest enveloped the instruments of death in a thick cloud of bluish smoke, describing a pattern of intertwining lines. When the light wind had borne away the fumes of incense, the guns were given out again in order. Each man knelt to receive his weapon from the hands of the priests, who recited a prayer in Latin as they returned it to him. When every armed man had returned to his place, the intense enthusiasm (hitherto mute) which possessed the congregation broke out in a tremendous yet touching manner: *"Domine, salvum fac regem! . . ."*

This was the prayer that the preacher thundered forth in an echoing voice, and which was sung twice through with vehement excitement. There was something wild and warlike about the sounds of their voices. The two notes of the word *regem,* which the peasants readily comprehended, were taken with such passionate force that Mlle. de Verneuil could not prevent her thoughts from straying with emotion to the exiled family of Bourbons. These recollections awoke others of her own past life. Her memory brought back festive scenes at the court where she herself had shone conspicuous, a court now scattered abroad. The form of the Marquis glided into her musings. She forgot the picture before her eyes; and with the sudden transition of thought natural to women's minds, her scheme of vengeance recurred to her, a scheme for which she was about to risk her life, and yet a single glance might bring it to naught. She meditated how to appear at her best, at this supreme moment of her career, and remembered that she had no ornaments with which to deck her hair for this ball. A spray of holly at once attracted her attention, and the thought of a wreath of its curling leaves and scarlet berries carried her away.

"Aha!" said Galope-Chopine, wagging his head to show his satisfaction. "My gun may hang fire when I am after birds, but when I am after the Blues—never!"

Marie looked more closely at her guide's countenance, and saw that it was on the same pattern as all the others which she had just seen. There seemed to be fewer ideas expressed in the old Chouan's face than in that of a child. His cheeks and forehead were puckered with unconcealed joy as he looked at his gun; religious conviction had infused an element of fanaticism into his elation, so that, for a moment, the worst propensities of civilization seemed to be manifested in his barbarous features.

They very soon reached a village, that is to say, a collection of four or five dwellings, like Galope-Chopine's own. Mlle. de Verneuil was finishing a breakfast, composed solely of bread and butter and dairy produce, when the newly re-

cruited Chouans arrived. The *recteur* headed these irregular troops, bearing in his hands a rough crucifix transformed into a banner, and followed by a gars, who was full of pride at assisting to carry the parish standard. Mlle. de Verneuil perforce found herself included in this detachment, which was on its way to Saint James, and consequently protected from dangers of all kinds; for Galope-Chopine had been happily inspired to make an indiscreet avowal to the leader of the troop—how that the pretty *garce* whom he was escorting was a good friend to the Gars.

It was growing towards sunset when the three travelers reached Saint James, a little town which owes its name to the English, by whom it was built in the fourteenth century, during the time of their rule in Brittany. Before they entered it, Mlle. de Verneuil beheld a curious scene of warfare, to which she gave but little heed, for she was afraid that some of her enemies might recognize her, and the fear quickened her pace. Five or six thousand peasants were bivouacking in a field. There was no suggestion of war about their costumes, which were not unlike those of the requisitionaries on La Pèlerine; on the contrary, the disorderly assemblage of men resembled a huge hiring-fair. A careful scrutiny was required to ascertain whether or no the Bretons carried arms at all; for their guns were almost hidden by the goatskins of various patterns that they wore, and in many cases the most conspicuous weapons were the scythes with which they had replaced the muskets that had been distributed among them. Some were eating and drinking, some were brawling and fighting, but the greater number were lying asleep upon the ground. There was no sign or trace of order or of discipline. An officer in a red uniform attracted Mlle. de Verneuil's attention; she thought that he must belong to the English army. Further on, two other officers appeared to be bent on teaching a few of the Chouans, who seemed to be quicker-witted than their fellows, how to handle a couple of cannon, of which the whole artillery of the future Royalist army appeared to consist.

The gars from Marignay were recognized by their standard, and welcomed with uproarious yells. Under cover of the bustle made in the camp by the arrival of the troops and its *recteurs,* Mlle. de Verneuil was able to make her way across it, and into the town, in safety. She reached an unpretending inn, at no great distance from the house where the ball was given. The town was so crowded with people that, after the greatest imaginable difficulty, she could only succeed in obtaining a wretched little room. When she had taken possession of it, and Galope-Chopine had given over the box that carried her mistress' costume into Francine's keeping, he stood waiting and hesitating in a manner that cannot be described. At any other time Mlle. de Verneuil would have been diverted by the spectacle of the Breton peasant out of his own parish; but now she broke the charm by drawing from her purse four crowns of six francs each, which she handed over to him.

"Take them!" said she to Galope-Chopine; "and if you wish to oblige me, you will return at once to Fougères without tasting cider, or passing through the camp."

The Chouan, in amazement at such open-handedness, was looking alternately at Mlle. de Verneuil and at the four crowns which he had received, but she dismissed him with a wave of the hand, and he vanished.

"How can you send him away, mademoiselle?" asked Francine. "Did you not see how the town is surrounded? How are we to leave it, and who will protect you here?"

"Have you not a protector of your own?" said Mlle. de Verneuil, with a low mocking whistle after the manner of Marche-à-Terre, whose ways she tried to mimic.

Francine blushed and smiled sadly at her mistress' high spirits.

"But where is *your* protector?" she said.

Mlle. de Verneuil rapidly drew out her dagger and showed it to the frightened Breton maid, who sank down into a chair and clasped her hands.

"What have you come to look for here, Marie?" she ex-

claimed; there was a note of entreaty in her voice which called for no response. Mlle. de Verneuil was absorbed in bending and twisting the sprays of holly which she had gathered; she said:

"I am not sure that the holly will look very pretty in my hair. Only a face as radiant as mine could bear such a sombre adornment. What do you think, Francine?"

Such remarks as this, made many times in the course of her toilette, showed that her mind was absolutely free from preoccupation. Any one who had overheard this strange girl would hardly have believed in the gravity of the crisis in which she was risking her life.

A somewhat short gown of Indian muslin revealed the delicate outlines of her figure, to which it clung like damp linen. Over this she wore a red overskirt, with innumerable drooping folds, that fell gradually lower and lower towards one side, thus preserving the graceful outlines of the Greek chiton. The sensuous beauty of this garb of a pagan priestess made the costume, a costume which the fashion of those days permitted women to wear, less indelicate; and, as a further palliation, Marie wound gauze about her white shoulders which the low lines of the tunic had left too bare. She knotted up the long locks of her hair at the back of her head in the irregular flattened cone that, by apparently adding length to the head, lends such charm to the faces of classical statues; reserving for her forehead a few long curls that fell on either side of her face in shining coils. Thus robed, and with her hair arranged thus, her resemblance to the greatest masterpieces of the Greek chisel was complete. She saw how every detail in the disposition of her hair set off the loveliness of her face, with a smile that denoted her approval; then she crowned herself with the wreath of holly which she had twisted. The red color of her tunic was repeated in her hair with the happiest effect by the thick clusters of scarlet berries. As she twisted back a few of the leaves so as to secure a fanciful contrast between their upper and under sides, Mlle. de Verneuil flung a glance over

herself in the mirror, criticising the general effect of her toilette.

"I am hideous to-night," she exclaimed, as though she had been surrounded by flatterers. "I look like a statue of Liberty."

She was careful to set her dagger in her corset, leaving the ruby-ornamented hilt protruding, so that the crimson beams might draw the eye to the beauties which her rival had so unworthily profaned. Francine could not reconcile herself to parting from her mistress. When she was quite ready to start, the maid was ready to accompany her, finding an excuse in the difficulties that women necessarily encounter in going to a dance in a little town in Lower Brittany. Would she not be required to uncloak Mlle. de Verneuil, to take off the overshoes which the filthy condition of the streets had rendered imperative (albeit sand had been laid down), and to remove the gauze veil that her mistress had wound about her head, so as to screen herself from the curious eyes of the Chouans, who had been drawn by curiosity to surround the house where the dance was taking place? The crowd was so dense that they went between two hedges of Chouans. Francine no longer tried to keep her mistress back. After rendering the final necessary assistance demanded by a toilette in which unruffled freshness was a first requirement, she stayed on in the courtyard. She could not leave her mistress to the chances of fate without being at hand to fly to her assistance, for the poor Breton maid foresaw nothing but calamities.

A strange scene was taking place in Montauran's room at the time of Marie's arrival at the festival. The young Marquis was almost dressed, and was donning the broad red ribbon that was to mark him out as the most important personage among those assembled, when the Abbé Gudin came in with an anxious face.

"Come quickly, my lord Marquis," said he. "You alone can calm the storm that has arisen among the chiefs. I do not know what it is all about. They are talking of with-

drawing from the King's service. It is that devil of a Rifoël who is the cause of the trouble, I think. There is always some piece of foolery at the bottom of these disputes. They say that Mme. du Gua upbraided him for coming to the ball in an unsuitable dress."

"The woman must be crazy," exclaimed the Marquis, "to expect——"

"The Chevalier du Vissard," the Abbé went on, interrupting him, "retorted that if you had given him the money, promised to him in the King's name——"

"Enough, enough, Abbé! Now I understand everything. The scene had been got up beforehand, had it not? And you are their spokesman——"

"*I*, my lord Marquis?" the Abbé broke in with yet another interruption, "I will support you vigorously. I hope that you will believe, in fairness to me, that the prospect of the re-establishment of the altar throughout France, and of the restoration of the King to the throne of his forefathers, holds out far greater inducements to my humble efforts than that Archbishopric of Rennes which you——"

The Abbé dared not go any further, for at these words a bitter smile stole over the lips of the Marquis. But the young chief at once suppressed the gloomy reflections that occurred to him. With austere brows he followed the Abbé Gudin into a large room that echoed with vehement clamor.

"I own the authority of no one present," Rifoël was crying out. He flung fiery glances on those about him, and his hand was finding the way to the hilt of his sabre.

"Do you own the authority of common sense?" asked the Marquis, coolly. The young Chevalier du Vissard, better known by his patronymic of Rifoël, kept silence in the presence of the general of the Catholic armies.

"What is the matter now, gentlemen?" the young chief demanded, as he scanned the faces about him.

"The matter, my lord Marquis," replied a notorious smuggler—embarrassed at first like a man of the people who has long been overawed by the prestige of a great lord, but

who loses all sense of restraint the moment that the boundary line that separates the pair has been overstepped, because thenceforth he regards him as their equal—"the matter is that you have come in the nick of time. I cannot talk in fine golden words, so I will put it roundly. I had five hundred men under me all through the last war, and since we have taken up arms again I have managed to find, for the King's service, a thousand heads quite as hard as my own. All along, for seven years past, I have been risking my life in the good cause; I do not blame you at all, but all work ought to be paid for. Therefore, to begin with, I wish to be called M. de Cottereau; and I wish to be requited by the rank of colonel, otherwise I shall offer my submission to the First Consul. My men and I, you see, my lord Marquis, are always dunned by a cursedly pressing creditor who must be satisfied. Here he is!" he added, striking his stomach.

"Have the fiddles arrived?" Montauran inquired of Mme. du Gua in caustic tones.

But the smuggler, in his brutal way, had opened up too all-important a question; and these natures, as calculating as ambitious, had been too long in suspense as to their prospects in the King's service for the scene to be cut short by the young leader's scorn. The young Chevalier du Vissard, in his heat and excitement, sprang to confront Montauran, and seized his hand to prevent him from turning away.

"Take care, my lord Marquis!" he said. "You are treating too lightly men who have some claim to the gratitude of him whom you represent here. We are aware that His Majesty has given you full power to recognize the services we have rendered, which ought to be rewarded either in this world or in the next—for the scaffold is prepared for us daily. As for me, I am sure that the rank of maréchal de camp——"

"Of colonel, you mean?"

"No, my lord Marquis, Charette made me a colonel. My claim to the rank I have spoken of cannot be disputed. Still I am not urging my own claims just now in any way, but

those of my dauntless brothers in arms, whose services stand in need of acknowledgment. Hitherto your promises and your personal guarantees have satisfied them;" he lowered his voice as he added, "and I must say that they are easily contented. But," and he raised his voice again, "when the sun shall rise at last in the Château of Versailles to shine upon the happy days of the monarchy to come, will all the King's faithful servants in France, who have aided the King to recover France, readily obtain his favor for their families? Will their widows receive pensions? Will their unfortunate losses of property through confiscation be made good to them? I doubt it. Therefore, my lord Marquis, will not indisputable proofs of past services be useful then? It is not that I ever shall mistrust the King himself, but I heartily mistrust those cormorants of ministers and courtiers about him, who will din a lot of trash into his ears about the public good, the honor of France, the interests of the crown, and a hundred more such things. They will make mock then of a loyal Vendean or a brave Chouan because he is aged, and because the old sword that once he drew for the good cause dangles against his legs, which are shrunken with sufferings. Can you blame us, Marquis?"

"You put it admirably, M. du Vissard; but you have spoken a little too soon," replied Montauran.

"Listen, Marquis," said the Comte de Bauvan in a low voice, "upon my word, Rifoël has told us some very true things. You yourself are always sure of access to the King's ear; but the rest of us can seldom go to see our master. So I tell you frankly that if you do not pledge your word as a gentleman to obtain the post of Grand Master of the Rivers and Forests of France for me, when opportunity offers, the devil take me if I will risk my neck. It is no small task that I am set—to conquer Normandy for the King, so I hope to have the Order for it. But there is time yet to think about that," he added, blushing. "God forbid that I should follow the example of these wretches, and worry you. You will speak to the King for me, and there is an end of it."

Each of the chiefs by some more or less ingenious device found means to inform the Marquis of the extravagant reward which he expected for his services. One modestly asked for the Governorship of Brittany, another for a barony, one demanded promotion, and another a command; while one and all of them desired pensions.

"Well, Baron," the Marquis said, addressing M. du Guénic, "do you really wish for nothing?"

"Faith, Marquis, these gentlemen have left nothing for me but the crown of France; but I could readily manage to put up with that——"

"Gentlemen!" thundered the Abbé Gudin. "Consider this, that if you are so eager in the day of victory, you will spoil everything. Will not the King be compelled to make concessions to the Revolutionaries?"

"What! to the Jacobins!" exclaimed the smuggler. "Let the King leave that to me! I will undertake to set my thousand men to hang them, and we shall very soon be rid of them——"

"M. de Cottereau," said the Marquis, "I see that several invited guests are arriving. We must vie with each other in assiduity and zeal, so as to determine them to take part in our sacred enterprise. You understand that the present moment is not a time to consider your demands, even if they were just."

The Marquis went towards the door as he spoke, as if to welcome some nobles from the neighboring districts, of whom he had caught sight, but the bold smuggler intercepted him deferentially and respectfully.

"No! no! my lord Marquis, excuse me, but in 1793 the Jacobins taught us too thoroughly that it is not the reaper who gets the bannock. If you put your name to this scrap of paper, I will bring you fifteen hundred gars to-morrow; otherwise, I shall treat with the First Consul."

The Marquis looked haughtily around, and saw that the onlookers at the debate regarded the audacity and resolution of the old free-lance with no unfavorable eyes. One man

only, seated in a corner, appeared to take no part whatever in what was going on, but was employed in filling a white clay pipe with tobacco. The contempt that he visibly showed for the orators, his unassuming manner, and the commiseration for himself which the Marquis read in the man's eyes, made him look closely at this magnanimous adherent, in whom he recognized Major Brigaut. The chief went quickly up to him, and said:

"How about *you?* What do you ask for?"

"Oh! my lord Marquis, if the King comes back again, I shall be quite satisfied."

"But for you yourself?"

"For me? Oh! . . . You are joking, my lord."

The Marquis pressed the Breton's hard hand, and spoke to Mme. du Gua, by whom he was standing. "Madame, I may lose my life in this undertaking of mine before I have had time to send the King a faithful report of the Catholic armies in Brittany. If you should see the days of the Restoration, do not forget either this brave fellow or the Baron du Guénic. There is more devotion in these two than in all the other people here."

He indicated the chiefs who were waiting, not without impatience, till the youthful Marquis should comply with their demands. Papers were displayed in every hand, in which, doubtless, their services in previous wars had been recorded by Royalist generals; and one and all began to murmur. The Abbé Gudin, the Comte de Bauvan, and the Baron du Guénic were taking counsel in their midst, as to the best means of assisting the Marquis to reject such extravagant claims, for in their opinion the young leader's position was a very difficult one.

There was a sarcastic light in the blue eyes of the Marquis as he suddenly gazed about him on those assembled, and spoke in clear tones:

"Gentlemen, I do not know whether the powers which the King has vouchsafed to me are comprehensive enough to permit of my fulfilling your demands. He possibly did not

foresee such zeal and such devotion as yours. You yourselves shall decide as to my duties, and perhaps I may be able to perform them."

He went and returned promptly with a letter lying open in his hand, ratified by the royal signature and seal.

"These are the letters-patent by virtue of which you owe me obedience," said he. "They empower me to govern in the King's name the provinces of Brittany, Normandy, Maine, and Anjou; and to acknowledge the services of the officers that shall distinguish themselves in his Majesty's armies."

An evident thrill of satisfaction went through those assembled. The Chouans came up and respectfully formed a circle about the Marquis. All eyes were fixed on the King's signature, when the young chief, who was standing by the hearth, flung the letter into the fire, where it was burned to ashes in a moment.

"I will no longer command any but those who see in the King, a King; and not a prey for them to devour. Gentlemen, you are at liberty to leave me——"

A cry of "Long live the King!" went up from Mme. du Gua, the Abbé Gudin, Major Brigaut, the Chevalier du Vissard, the Baron du Guénic, and the Comte de Bauvan. If, in the first instance, the other chiefs wavered a moment before echoing the cry of these enthusiasts, the Marquis' noble action soon produced an effect upon them; they besought him to forget what had happened, and protested that, no matter for letters-patent, he should always be their leader.

"Come, let us dance!" cried the Comte de Bauvan, "and happen what may! After all," he added merrily, "it is better praying to God than to the saints. Let us fight first. and by-and-by we shall see."

"Ah! that is quite true. Begging your pardon, Baron," said Brigaut, speaking in a low voice to the staunch du Guénic, "I have never seen a day's wage asked for in the morning."

The company distributed themselves through the rooms, where several people had already come together. In vain the Marquis tried to dismiss the sombre expression which had wrought a change in his face; the chiefs could easily discern that the foregoing scene had left an unfortunate impression on the mind of a man who still united some of the fair illusions of youth with his devotion to the cause; and this shamed them.

The assemblage, composed of the most enthusiastic partisans of royalty, was radiant with intoxicating joy. In the remote parts of a rebellious province they had never had an opportunity of forming just opinions as to the events of the Revolution, and had to take the most visionary assumptions for solid realities. Their courage had been stimulated by Montauran's bold initial measures, by his fortune and ability, and by the name he bore, all of which had combined to cause that most perilous form of intoxication—the intoxication of politics, which is only abated after torrents of blood have been shed, and for the most part, shed in vain. The Revolution was only a passing disturbance in France for all those who were present; and for them nothing appeared to be changed. The districts about them held to the House of Bourbon. So complete was the domination of the Royalists, that four years previously Hoche had brought about an armistice rather than a peace.

The nobles, therefore, held the Revolutionaries very cheap; they took Bonaparte for a Marceau, who had had better luck than his predecessor. And the ladies prepared to dance, in high spirits. Only a few of the chiefs who had met the Blues in the field were aware of the real gravity of the crisis, and they knew that they should be misunderstood if they spoke of the First Consul and his power to their countrymen who were behind the times. So they talked among themselves, turning indifferent eyes upon the ladies, who avenged themselves by criticising them to each other. Mme. du Gua, who appeared to be doing the honors of the ball, tried to distract the attention of the ladies from their impa-

tience, by retailing conventional flatteries to each in turn. The harsh sounds of the tuning of the instruments were already audible, when Mme. du Gua saw the Marquis, with a trace of melancholy still about his face. She hurried to him, and said:

"I hope you are not depressed by the scene you have had with those boors? It is a very commonplace occurrence."

She received no reply. The Marquis was absorbed in his musings. He thought that he heard some of the arguments that Marie had urged upon him in her prophetic tones among these very chiefs at the Vivetière—when she had tried to induce him to abandon the struggle of kings against peoples. But he had too much loftiness of soul, too much pride, and possibly too strong a belief in the work that he had begun, to forsake it now; and he resolved at that moment to carry it on with a stout heart, in spite of obstacles. He raised his head again proudly, and the meaning of Mme. du Gua's words only then reached him.

"You are at Fougères, of course!" she was saying with a bitterness that betrayed the futility of the attempts she had made to divert his mind. "Ah! my lord, I would give all the life in me to put *her* into your hands, and to see you happy with her."

"Then why did you fire at her so dexterously?"

"Because I wished her either dead or in your arms. Yes! I could have given my love to the Marquis of Montauran on the day when I thought that I discerned a hero in him. To-day I have for him only a compassionate friendship! he is held aloof from glory by the roving heart of an opera girl."

"As to love," the Marquis answered with irony in his tones, "you are quite wrong about me! If I loved that girl, madame, I should feel less desire for her—and, but for you, I should even now possibly think no more of her."

"Here she is!" said Mme. du Gua suddenly.

The haste with which the Marquis turned his head gave a horrible pang to the poor lady; but by the brilliant light of the candles the slightest changes that took place in the fea-

tures of the man whom she so ardently loved were easily discerned, so that she fancied she saw some hopes of a return, when he turned his face back to hers, with a smile at this feminine stratagem.

"At what are you laughing?" asked the Comte de Bauvan.

"At a soap-bubble that has burst!" Mme. du Gua replied gaily. "If we are to believe the Marquis, he wonders to-day that his heart ever beat for a moment for the creature who calls herself Mlle. de Verneuil. You know whom I mean?"

"The creature?" queried the Count, with reproach in his voice. "It is only right, madame, that the author of the mischief should make reparation for it, and I give you my word of honor that she really is the daughter of the Duc de Verneuil."

"Which word of honor, Count?" asked the Marquis in an entirely different tone. "Are we to believe you at the Vivetière or here at Saint James?"

Mlle. de Verneuil was announced in a loud voice. The Count hurried towards the door, offered his hand with every sign of the deepest respect to the fair newcomer, and led her through the curious throng of gazers to the Marquis and Mme. du Gua.

"Believe nothing but the word I have given you to-day," he said to the astonished chief.

Mme. du Gua turned pale at the untoward appearance of the girl who was standing looking proudly about her, to discover, among those assembled, the former guests at the Vivetière. She waited to receive her rival's constrained greeting; and, without a glance at the Marquis, she allowed the Count to lead her to a place of honor by the side of Mme. du Gua, to whom she bowed slightly in a patronizing way. The latter would not be vexed at this, and her woman's instinct led her at once to assume a friendly and smiling expression. For a moment Mlle. de Verneuil's beauty and singular costume drew a murmur from the company. When the Marquis and Mme. du Gua looked at those who had been at the Vivetière, they saw that the respectful attitude of

each one seemed to be sincere, and that every one appeared to be considering how to reinstate himself in the good graces of the Parisian lady, concerning whom they had been in error. The two antagonists were now face to face.

"But this is witchcraft, mademoiselle! Who but you in all the world could take us by surprise like this? Did you really come hither quite alone?" asked Mme. du Gua.

"Quite alone," Mlle. de Verneuil repeated, "so this evening, madame, you will have only me to kill."

"Make allowances for me," answered Mme. du Gua. "I cannot tell you how much pleasure I feel at meeting you again. I have been really overwhelmed by the recollection of the wrong I did you, and I was seeking for an opportunity which should permit me to atone for it."

"The wrong you did me, madame, I can readily pardon; but the death of the Blues whom you murdered lies heavily on my heart. I might, moreover, make some further complaint of the brusque style of your correspondence. . . . But, after all, I forgive everything, on account of the service that you have done me."

Mme. du Gua lost countenance as she felt her hand clasped in that of her lovely rival, who was smiling upon her in an offensively gracious manner. The Marquis had not stirred so far, but now he seized the Count's arm in a close grip.

"You have shamefully deceived me," he said. "You have even involved my honor; I am no comedy dupe; I will have your life for this, or you shall have mine."

"I am ready to afford you every explanation that you may desire, Marquis," said the Count stiffly, and they went into an adjoining room. Even those who were least acquainted with the mystery underlying this scene began to understand the interest that it possessed; so that no one stirred when the violins gave the signal for the dancing to begin.

Mme. du Gua spoke, compressing her lips in a kind of fury:

"Mademoiselle, what service can I have had the honor of rendering, of importance sufficient to deserve——?"

"Did you not enlighten me, madame, as to the Marquis de Montauran's real nature? With what calm indifference the execrable man allowed me to go to my death! . . . I give him up to you very willingly."

"Then what have you come here to seek?" Mme. du Gua asked quickly.

"The esteem and the reputation of which you robbed me at the Vivetière, madame. Do not give yourself any uneasiness about anything else. Even if the Marquis were to come back to me, a lost love regained is no love at all, as you must be aware."

Mme. du Gua took Mlle. de Verneuil's hand in hers with a charming caressing gesture, such as women like to use among themselves, especially when men are also present.

"Well, dear child, I am delighted that you are so sensible about it. If the service which I have rendered you has been a somewhat painful one at the outset" (and here she pressed the hand which she held, though she felt within her a wild longing to tear it in pieces, when she found how delicately soft the fingers were), "at any rate it shall be thorough. Just listen to me. I know the Gars' nature well," she went on, with a treacherous smile; "he would have deceived you, he will not marry any woman, nor can he do so."

"Ah!"

"Yes, mademoiselle. He only accepted his perilous mission in order to win the hand of Mlle. d'Uxelles; his Majesty has promised to use all his influence to bring the marriage about."

"Indeed!"

Mlle. de Verneuil added not a word more to this satirical exclamation. The young and handsome Chevalier du Vissard, eager to earn her forgiveness for the witticism which had been a signal for the insults that had followed upon it at the Vivetière, came up to her and respectfully asked for a dance; she gave him her hand, and they hastened to take their places in the same quadrille with Mme. du Gua. The powdered or frizzled hair of the other ladies, and their toi-

lettes, which recalled the bygone days of the exiled court, looked ridiculous when confronted with the magnificent simplicity of the elegant costume which the prevailing fashion of the day permitted Mlle. de Verneuil to wear. The ladies condemned it aloud, and inwardly envied her. The men were never weary of admiring the effect of so simple a way of dressing the hair, and every detail about her dress, which owed all its charm to the graceful outlines which it displayed.

The Marquis and the Count returned to the ballroom, and stood behind Mlle. de Verneuil, who did not turn her head; but even if a mirror opposite to her had not informed her of the Marquis' presence, she would have learned it from the face of Mme. du Gua, whose apparent carelessness concealed but ill the anxiety with which she awaited the dispute that must sooner or later take place between the lovers. Although Montauran was talking with the Count and with two other persons, he could overhear the chat of his neighbors and of each pair of dancers, as, in the shifting figures of the quadrille, they stood for a moment where Mlle. de Verneuil had been.

"Oh! *mon Dieu;* yes, madame, she came here by herself," said one.

"She must be very fearless," his partner replied.

"If I had dressed myself like that, I should feel as if I had no clothes on," said another lady.

"Oh! the costume is indelicate," her cavalier answered, "but she is so pretty, and it is very becoming to her."

"Look at her! She dances so perfectly that it makes one blush for her. Is she not exactly like an opera girl?" the envious lady inquired.

"Do you think that she can have come here to treat with us in the name of the First Consul?" asked a third lady.

"What a joke!" said her partner.

"She will scarcely bring innocence with her as a dowry," laughed the lady.

The Gars turned sharply round to see the speaker who had ventured to make such an epigram, and Mme. du Gua gave him a look which said distinctly:

"You see what they think of her!"

"Madame," the Count said jestingly to Marie's enemy, "only ladies so far have deprived her of it."

In his heart the Marquis forgave the Count for all his offences. He ventured to glance at his mistress. Her loveliness was enhanced, as is nearly always the case with women, by the candle-light. She reached her place, her back was turned towards him, but as she talked with her partner the persuasive tones of her voice reached the Marquis.

"The First Consul is sending us very formidable ambassadors!" her partner remarked.

"That has been said already, sir, at the Vivetière," she replied.

"Your memory is as good as the King's!" returned the gentleman, vexed at his own awkwardness.

"Offences must be clearly kept in mind if they are to be forgiven," she said quickly, and a smile released him from his predicament.

"Are all of us included in the amnesty!" the Marquis asked. But she flung herself into the dance with childish enthusiasm, leaving him confused, and with his question unanswered. She saw how he was watching her in sullen gloom, and bent her head in a coquettish manner, which displayed the symmetry of her neck, heedful, at the same time, to omit no movement which could reveal the wonderful grace of her form. Marie's beauty was attractive as Hope, and elusive as Memory. To see her thus, was to wish to possess her at any cost. She knew this, and the consciousness of her own beauty made her face at that moment radiant with indescribable loveliness. The Marquis felt a tempest of love, anger, and madness raging in his heart; he wrung the Count's hand, and withdrew.

"Ah! has he gone away?" asked Mlle. de Verneuil when she came back to her place.

The Count hurried into the adjoining room, and thence brought back the Gars, making a significant gesture for the lady to whom he had extended his protection.

"He is mine!" she said within herself, as she studied the Marquis in the mirror; his face was somewhat agitated, but he was radiant with hope.

She received the young chief ungraciously, and did not vouchsafe a word to him, but she smiled as she turned away; she saw him so far above the others, that she felt proud of her tyrannous power over him. Guided by an instinct that all women obey more or less, she determined to make him pay a heavy price for a few kind words, in order that he might learn their value. When the quadrille came to an end, all the gentlemen who had been at the Vivetière came about Marie, each one endeavoring to obtain her forgiveness for his mistake by compliments more or less neatly turned. But he whom she would fain have seen at her feet kept away from her little court.

"He thinks that I love him yet," she said to herself, "and he will not make one among those to whom I am indifferent."

She declined to dance. Then, as if the ball had been given in her honor, she went from quadrille to quadrille, leaning upon the arm of the Comte de Bauvan, with whom it pleased her to appear to be on familiar terms. There was no one present who did not know the whole history of what had happened at the Vivetière, down to the smallest detail, thanks to Madame du Gua, who hoped, by this very publicity given to the affairs of Mlle. de Verneuil and the Marquis, to put a further hindrance to any understanding between them. In this way the two estranged lovers became objects of general interest. Montauran did not dare to approach his mistress; the recollection of her wrongs and the vehemence of his reawakened desires made her almost terrible in his eyes; and the young girl, though she seemed to give her attention to the dancers, was watching his face and its forced composure.

"It is dreadfully hot in here," she said to her cavalier. "I see that M. de Montauran's forehead is quite damp. Will you take me across on the other side, so that I can breathe? . . . This is stifling."

With a movement of the head, she indicated the next room, where a few card-players were sitting. The Marquis followed her, as if he had guessed at the words from the movements of her lips. He even hoped that she had left the crowd in order to see him once more, and with this hope the violence of his passion grew with redoubled force, after the restraint that he had imposed upon himself for the last few days. It pleased Mlle. de Verneuil to torment the young chief. Those eyes of hers, so like velvet, and so gentle for the Count, became cold and gloomy for him, if he met their gaze by chance. Montauran made an effort that seemed to cost him something, and said in an uncertain voice:

"Will you never forgive me?"

"Love forgives nothing unless it forgives everything," she said, in a dry, indifferent tone. Then, as she saw him give a sudden start of joy, she added, "but it must be love. . . ."

She rose, took the Count's arm, and hastened to a little sitting-room adjoining the cardroom. The Marquis followed her thither.

"You shall hear me!" he cried.

"You will make others imagine, sir," she replied, "that I came here on your account, and not out of respect for myself. If you will not desist from this detestable persecution, I shall go."

Then he bethought himself of one of the wildest extravagances of the last Duke of Lorraine. "Let me speak to you," he entreated, "only for so long as I can keep this coal in my hand."

He stooped, snatched up a firebrand from the hearth, and held it in a strenuous grasp. Mlle. le Verneuil reddened, drew her arm quickly from the Count, and looked in amazement at the Marquis. The Count softly withdrew and left the lovers alone. Nothing is so convincing in a lover as some piece of splendid folly—his mad courage had shaken Marie's very heart.

"You simply show me," she said, trying to compel him

to drop the coal, "that you would be capable of giving me over to the worst of torture. You are all for extremes. You believed the evidence of a fool and a woman's slander; you suspected that she who came to save your life was capable of betraying you."

"Yes," he said, smiling. "I have been cruel to you, but you must forget that;—I shall never forget it. Ah! hear me. . . . I was infamously deceived; but so many things on that wretched day all told against you . . ."

"And those things were enough to extinguish your love?"

He hesitated a moment; with a scornful movement she rose.

"Marie," he said, "just now, I wish to believe you, and you only."

"Then drop that coal! You must be mad. Open your hand; do as I wish."

He delighted in the feeble resistance he made to her gentle efforts; he wanted to prolong the keen pleasure that he felt in the pressure of her little fingers; but she succeeded at last in opening the hand she felt she could have kissed. The fire had been extinguished in blood.

"Now," she said, " what was the use of doing that?"

She tore little strips from her handkerchief and dressed the wound; it was not very serious, and the Marquis easily concealed it under his glove. Madame du Gua came into the cardroom on tiptoe, and furtively watched the lovers, cleverly keeping herself out of their sight, noting from behind them their slightest movements; yet she found it difficult to guess at their talk from anything that she saw them do.

"If everything that you have heard against me were true, admit, at least, that now I am well avenged," said Marie; there was a malignity in her expression that made the Marquis turn pale.

"What feeling was it that brought you here?"

"My dear boy, you are a great coxcomb. Do you think you can insult such a woman as I am with impunity? I

came here for your sake, and for mine," she added after a pause, laying her hand on the cluster of rubies at her breast, and showing him the blade of a poniard.

"What does all this mean?" meditated Madame du Gua.

"But you love me still," Marie went on; "or at least, you wish for me; and that piece of folly of yours," she said, taking the hand in hers, "made it clear to me. I am again as I had wished to be, and I shall go away happy. Those who love us we always forgive. And I—I am loved; I have regained the respect, the man who is for me the whole world; I could die now."

"You love me yet?" said the Marquis.

"Did I say so?" she replied; she laughed; she was happy, for ever since her arrival she had made the Marquis feel increasing torment. "But had I not some sacrifices to make in order to come here? For I saved M. de Bauvan from death," she went on; "and he, more grateful than you, has offered me his name and fortune in return for my protection. That idea never entered your mind."

Her last words astonished the Marquis; the Count appeared to have made a fool of him; he struggled with a feeling of anger stronger than any that he had yet known, and did not reply.

"Ah, you are deliberating!" she said, with a bitter smile.

"Mademoiselle, your misgivings justify mine."

"Let us go back," said Mlle. de Verneuil, who caught a glimpse of Madame du Gua's robe in the cardroom.

Marie rose; but a wish to torment her rival made her hesitate a little.

"Do you want to plunge me into hell?" asked the Marquis, taking her hand and holding it tightly.

"Where did you plunge *me* five days ago? And now, now at this moment, are you not leaving me in cruel suspense as to the sincerity of your love?"

"How do I know that your vengeance may not go so far as this—to take possession of my whole life, so that you may sully it, rather than compass my death . . ."

"Ah, you do not love me; you only think of yourself, and not of me," she said, with angry tears in her eyes.

The coquette knew well the power of those eyes of hers when they were drowned in tears.

"Take my life, then," said the Marquis, now quite beside himself, "but dry those tears."

"Oh, my love!" she murmured; "the words, the tones, the look that I waited for, to wish for thy happiness rather than mine. But, my lord," she resumed, "I ask for one last proof of your affection, that you tell me is so great. I can stay here for only a little, only for the time needed to make sure that you are mine. I shall not take even a glass of water in this house, where a woman lives who has twice tried to murder me, who at this moment perhaps is planning some treachery against us both, and who is listening to us at this moment," she added, pointing out to the Marquis the floating folds of Madame du Gua's robe.

Then she dried her tears, and bent to the ear of the young noble, who trembled to feel her soft breath on him.

"Prepare everything so that we can go," she said. "You will take me back to Fougères, and there you shall know whether I love you or no. For the second time I trust in you. Will you too trust a second time in me?"

"Ah, Marie, you have led me on till I scarcely know what I am doing. Your words, your looks, your presence intoxicate me. I am ready to do everything you wish."

"Well, then, give me one moment's bliss. Let me enjoy the only triumph for which I have longed. I want to breathe freely once more, to live the life of my dreams, to take my fill of illusions before they leave me. Let us go. Come and dance with me."

They went back again together into the ballroom. For her the gratification of heart and of vanity had been as complete as a woman can know; but her inscrutable soft eyes, the mysterious smile about her mouth, and her swift movements in the excited dance, kept the secret of Mlle. de Verneuil's thoughts as the sea buries the secret of some crim-

inal who has given a heavy corpse into its keeping. Yet a murmur of admiration went through the room as she turned to her lover's arm for the waltz; and closely interlocked, with drooping heads and languid eyes, they swayed voluptuously round and round, clasping each other in a kind of frenzy, revealing all their hopes of pleasure from a closer union.

"Go and see if Pille-Miche is in the camp, Count," said Mme. du Gua to M. de Bauvan. "Bring him to me; and for this little service you may assure yourself that you shall receive anything that you shall ask of me, even my hand. . . . My revenge will cost me dear," she said, as she saw him go; "but it shall not fail this time."

A few moments after this scene Mlle. de Verneuil and the Marquis were seated in a berline drawn by four strong horses. Francine did not utter a word. She was surprised to see the two who to all appearance had been foes now sitting hand in hand and on such good terms with each other. She did not even venture to put the question to herself whether this meant love or treachery on her mistress' part. Thanks to the stillness and the darkness of night, the Marquis could not perceive Mlle. de Verneuil's agitation, which increased as she drew nearer and nearer to Fougères. Through the faint dusk they could see the spire of St. Leonard's church in the distance; and then—"I shall die," said Marie to herself.

When they reached the first hill on the road, the same thought came to both the lovers; they left the carriage, and walked up it, as if in memory of that first day of their meeting.

Marie took Montauran's arm, and thanked him by a smile for having respected her silence. When they reached the stretch of level ground at the summit, whence they could see Fougères, she emerged from her reverie.

"Come no further," she said; "my authority will not save you from the Blues to-day."

Montauran showed some astonishment at this; but she

smiled sadly and pointed to a massive boulder, as if to bid him to be seated, while she herself remained standing in a melancholy attitude. The heartrending grief within her made the artifices which she had used so lavishly no longer possible to her. She could have knelt on burning coals just then, and have been no more conscious of them than the Marquis had been of the brand which he had seized to make known the vehemence of his passion. After looking long at her lover with the deepest sorrow in her gaze, she pronounced the terrible words:

"All your suspicions of me are true."

The Marquis made an unconscious movement.

"Ah, for pity's sake," she cried, clasping her hands, "hear me to the end without interrupting me. I am really the daughter of the Duc de Verneuil," she went on in an unsteady voice; "but I am only his natural daughter. My mother, a Mlle. de Castéran, took the veil to escape from the punishment which her family had prepared for her. She expiated her fault by fifteen years of weeping, and died at Séez. It was only at the last, when on her deathbed, that the dear abbess, for my sake, sent an entreaty to the man who had forsaken her; for she knew that I had neither friends, nor fortune, nor prospects. This man, who was well remembered in Francine's home (for I had been confided to her mother's care), had quite forgotten his child. Yet the Duke welcomed me gladly, and recognized my claim upon him because I was pretty, and perhaps, too, because I brought back memories of his younger days. He was one of those great lords who, in the previous reign, took a pride in showing how that, if a crime were but gracefully perpetrated, it needs must be condoned. I will say no more about him; he was my father. And yet you must suffer me to explain how my life in Paris could not but leave my mind tainted. In the Duc de Verneuil's circle, and in the society into which he introduced me, there was a craze for the sceptical philosophy which France had accepted with enthusiasm, because it was put forward every-

where with so much ability. The brilliant talk that pleased my ears found favor with me on account of the keenness of apprehension displayed in it, or by reason of the cleverly-turned formulas which brought contempt upon religion and upon truth. The men who made light of feelings and opinions expressed them all the better because they had never felt or held them; and their epigrammatic turn of expression was not more attractive than the lively ease with which they could put a whole story into a word. Sometimes, however, their cleverness misled them; and women found them wearisome when love-making became a science rather than an affair of the heart. I made a feeble resistance to this torrent, although my soul (forgive me for my vanity) was impassioned enough to feel that *esprit* had withered all these natures about me; the life that I led in those days ended in a chronic strife between my natural disposition and the warped habits of mind that I had acquired. A few aspiring intellects had amused themselves by encouraging me in a freedom of thought and a contempt for public opinion that deprives a woman of a certain reticence, without which she has no charm. Alas! it has not been in the power of adversity to correct the defects which prosperity implanted in me," and she sighed.

"My father, the Duc de Verneuil," she resumed, "died after recognizing me as his daughter, leaving a will which considerably diminished the estate of my half-brother, his legitimate son, in my favor. One morning I found myself without a protector or a roof above my head. My brother disputed the will which had enriched me. My vanity had been developed during the past three years that had been spent in a wealthy household. My father had indulged all my fancies; to him I owed a craving for luxury, and habits in which my simple and inexperienced mind failed to recognize a perilous bondage. The Maréchal Duc de Lenoncourt, one of my father's friends, a man of seventy, offered to become my guardian. I accepted his offer; and a few days after the detestable lawsuit had begun, I found

myself in a splendid house, where I was in full possession of all the advantages that a brother's unkindness had refused to me over our father's coffin. The old Marshal used to come to spend a few hours with me every evening; and from him I heard only gentle and soothing words. His white hair and all the touching proofs of paternal tenderness which he gave me led me to believe that the feelings of my own heart were likewise his; and I liked to think that I was his daughter. I took the ornaments that he gave to me, and made no secret of any of my fancies when I saw him so glad to indulge them. One evening I discovered that all Paris looked upon me as the poor old man's mistress. It was made clear to me that I could never re-establish my innocence, of which I had been groundlessly deprived. The man who had taken advantage of my inexperience could not be my lover, and would not be my husband. In the week in which I made this hideous discovery, and on the eve of the day that had been fixed for my marriage —for I had insisted that he should give me his name, the one reparation that it was in his power to make me—he suddenly started for Coblentz. I was ignominiously driven from the little house in which the Marshal had installed me, and which was not his own property. So far I have told the truth to you as if I stood before the Judgment Throne; but after this point do not ask for a complete list of all the sufferings that lie buried in the memory of an unhappy girl. One day, sir, I found myself Danton's wife. A few days later, and the great oak-tree about which I had cast my arms was uprooted by the tempest. Then, when plunged for the second time into utter misery, I determined to die. I do not know if it was mere love of life, or the hope of outwearing misfortune, and so of finding at last, in the depths of this infinite abyss, the happiness that eluded my grasp, or by what other motive I was unconsciously counseled. I know not whether I was led away by the arguments of the young man from Vendôme, who, for the past two years, has hung about me like a serpent about a tree,

thinking, no doubt, that some overwhelming misfortune may give me to him. Indeed, I do not know how I came to accept this hateful mission, of winning the love of a stranger whom I was to betray for three hundred thousand francs! Then I saw you, sir, and I knew you at once. I knew it by one of those presentiments that never lead us astray; and yet I was glad to doubt it, for the more I loved you, the more appalling the conviction grew for me. When I rescued you from Hulot's clutches, I forswore the part that I was playing; I determined to outwit the executioners instead of deceiving their victim. It was wrong of me to play in that way with men's lives, and with their schemes, and with myself, with all the heedlessness of a girl who can see nothing but sentiment in the world. I thought that I was loved, and allowed the hope of beginning my life anew to be my guide; but everything about me, and even I myself, perhaps, betrayed my lawless past, for you must have mistrusted a woman with so passionate a nature as mine. Alas! who could refuse forgiveness to me for my love and my dissimulation? Yes, sir, I felt as though, after a long and uneasy sleep, I had awakened to find myself a girl of sixteen again. Was I not in Alençon? The pure and innocent memories of my childish days there rose up before me. My wild credulity led me to think that love would give me a baptism of innocence. For a little while I thought that I was a maiden still, for as yet I had never loved. But, yesterday evening it seemed to me that there was sincerity in your passion; and a voice within me cried, 'Why do you deceive him?' Know this, therefore, Marquis," she went on, in a deep, hard voice which seemed proudly to demand her own condemnation—"know this for a certainty, that I am only a dishonored creature and unworthy of you. From this moment I will resume my rôle of castaway; I am too weary to sustain any longer the part of the woman whom you had led to yield herself to all the most sacred impulses of her heart. Virtue weighs me down; I should despise you if you were weak enough to marry me. A Comte de Bauvan might per-

haps commit such a folly; but you, sir, be worthy of your future, and leave me without regret. The courtesan, you see, would require too much; *she* would love you in nowise like a simple and artless girl—she who felt in her heart for a little while the exquisite hope that she might be your companion, that she might make you always happy and do you honor, and be a noble and high-minded wife to you; and who, through these very thoughts that moved her, gathered courage, and revived her evil nature of vice and infamy, so as to set it between herself and you as an eternal barrier. I give up honor and fortune for your sake. The pride which lays this sacrifice upon me will uphold me in my wretchedness, and my fate I leave to the disposal of destiny. I will never betray you. I shall go back to Paris; and when I am there your name will be another separate self to me; and the splendid heroism with which you will invest it will be my consolation in all my sorrows. As for you, you are a man; you will forget me—Farewell."

She fled in the direction of the valleys of St. Sulpice, and vanished before the Marquis had risen to delay her; but she retraced her steps, hid herself in a fissure of the rocks, raised her head, and anxiously and doubtfully studied the Marquis. He was walking on without heeding the direction in which he went, like a man distraught.

"If his should be a weak nature," she said to herself as he disappeared, and she felt herself cut off from him, "will he understand me?"

She trembled. Then she suddenly walked on towards Fougères by herself, with rapid steps, as if she feared that the Marquis might follow her to the town, where he would have met with his death.

"Well, Francine, what did he say?" she asked of her faithful Breton, as soon as they were together again.

"Alas! Marie, I was sorry for him. You great ladies can stab a man to the heart with a bitter word."

"What was he like when he came up with you?"

"Did he so much as see me?—Oh! Marie, he loves you!"

"Oh, he loves me, or he loves me not!" she answered, "two words that mean heaven or hell for me; and between those two extremes I cannot find a place on which to set my foot."

After she had accomplished the task laid upon her by fate, Marie could give way to her sorrow. Her face had kept its composure hitherto, owing to a mixture of different sentiments within her, but now it underwent a rapid change, so that after a day spent in fluctuating between presentiments of joy or despair, her beauty lost its radiance and the freshness which owes its existence either to the absence of all passion or to transports of happiness. Hulot and Corentin came to see her shortly after her arrival, curious to know the results of her wild enterprise. Marie received them smilingly.

"Well," she said to the commandant, whose anxious face looked searchingly at her, "the fox is coming within range of your guns again, and you will soon gain a very glorious victory!"

"What has happened?" Corentin inquired carelessly. He gave Mlle. de Verneuil a sidelong glance, such as this sort of diplomatist uses for discovering the thoughts of others.

"Ah!" she answered, "the Gars is more in love with me than ever, and I made him come with us as far as the gates of Fougères."

"Apparently that is where your power ends," said Corentin, "and the *ci-devant's* fears are still stronger than the love which you inspire in him."

Mlle. de Verneuil glanced contemptuously at Corentin.

"You judge him by yourself," she replied.

"Well," he said, serenely, "why did you not bring him as far as your own house?"

"If he really loved me, commandant," she said to Hulot, with a malicious glance, "would you bear a grudge against me if I saved him and bore him away out of France?"

The old veteran went quickly up to her, and took her

hand as if to kiss it, with a sort of enthusiasm; then he gazed steadily at her and said, as his brow grew dark:

"You forget my two friends, and my sixty-three men!"

"Ah! commandant," she said with all the *naïveté* of passion, "that was not his fault, he was tricked by a bad woman. Charette's mistress, who, I believe, would drink the blood of the Blues."

"Come, Marie," Corentin put in, "do not make fun of the commandant; he does not understand your jests as yet."

"Be silent," she answered, "and know that the day on which you annoy me a little too much will be your last."

"I see, mademoiselle," said Hulot, with no bitterness in his tone, "that I must prepare to fight."

"You are in no condition to do so, my dear colonel. I saw more than six thousand of their men at Saint James; regular troops, and ordnance, and English officers. But without *him,* what will become of all these people? I think, as Fouché does, that his head is everything."

"Very well, when shall we have it?" Corentin asked impatiently.

"I do not know," was her careless response.

"English officers!" cried Hulot, in hot wrath, "the one thing wanting to make a downright brigand of him! Ah! I will fit him up with his Englishmen, that I will! . . . It seems to me, citizen diplomatist, that you allow that girl to upset all your plans from time to time," was Hulot's remark to Corentin, when they were a few paces distant from the house.

"It is quite natural, citizen commandant," said Corentin, with a pensive air, "that you are bewildered by all that she has told us. You men of the sword do not know that there are several ways of making war. To make a dexterous use of the passions of men and women, as so many springs which can be set in motion for the benefit of the State; to set in position all the wheels in the mighty piece of machinery that we call a Government; to take a pleasure in setting within it the most stubborn sentiments, like detents

whose action one can amuse oneself by controlling; is not all this the work of a creator? Is it not a position like God's, in the centre of the universe?"

"You will permit me to prefer my trade to yours," the soldier answered drily. "Do as you will with that machinery of yours; I acknowledge no superior but the Minister of War. I have my instructions, and I shall take the field with stout fellows who will not skulk, and openly confront the enemy whom you wish to take from behind."

"Oh, you can get ready to march if you like," Corentin rejoined. "Inscrutable as you may think this girl, I have managed to gather from her that there will be some skirmishing for you; and before very long I shall have the pleasure of obtaining for you a *tête-à-tête* with the chief of these brigands."

"How will you do that?" inquired Hulot, stepping back a little, the better to see this singular being.

"Mlle. de Verneuil loves the Gars," Corentin answered in a stifled voice, "and very likely he is in love with her. He is a Marquis, he wears the red ribbon, he is young, and he has a clever head, who knows but that he may still be wealthy,—how many inducements! She would be very foolish not to play for her own hand, and try to marry him rather than give him up to us. She is endeavoring to keep us amused, but I can read a kind of misgiving in the girl's eyes. The two lovers will most probably arrange a meeting, perhaps they have done so already. Well, then, to-morrow I shall have my man fast enough. Hitherto he was the enemy of the Republic and nothing more, but a few minutes ago he became mine as well, for all those who have taken it into their heads to come between this girl and me have died on the scaffold."

When he had finished, Corentin became too much absorbed in his own meditations to notice the expression of intense disgust on the true-hearted soldier's face. When Hulot became aware of the depths in this intrigue, and of the nature of the springs employed in Fouché's ma-

chinery, he made up his mind at once to thwart Corentin in every matter in which the success of the enterprise or the wishes of the Government were not essentially concerned, and to give to the foe of the Republic a chance of dying honorably sword in hand, before he could fall a victim to the executioner, whose avowed caterer stood before him in the person of this secret agent of the upper powers of the police.

"If the First Consul were to take my advice," he said, turning his back on Corentin, "he would leave this kind of fox to fight it out with the aristocrats—they would be well matched—and he should employ soldiers in quite other business."

Corentin looked coolly at the veteran (whose thoughts shone out plainly in his face), and a sardonic expression returned to his eyes, revealing a sense of superiority in this Machiavellian understrapper.

"Give three ells of blue cloth to brutes of that sort, and hang a bit of iron at their sides, and they fancy that in politics men may only be got rid of after one fashion," said he to himself. He walked slowly on for a few minutes, and suddenly exclaimed within:

"Yes, the hour has come, and the woman shall be mine! The circle that I have traced about her has been gradually growing smaller and smaller for five years; I have her now, and with her help I shall climb as high in the Government as Fouché. . . . Yes, when she loses the one man whom she has loved, the agony of it will give her to me body and soul. All that I have to do now is to keep a watch on her night and day, to surprise her secret."

A moment later an onlooker might have seen Corentin's pale face at the window of a house whence he could behold every one who came into the blind alley, between the row of houses and St. Leonard's church. He was there again on the morning of the next day; patient as a cat that lies in wait for a mouse, attentive to the slightest sound, and engaged in submitting every passer-by to a rigorous

scrutiny. It was the morning of a market day; and although in those troubled times, the peasants scarcely ventured to come to the town, Corentin saw a gloomy looking man clad in goatskins, who carried a small round flat-shaped basket on his arm, and who went towards Mlle. de Verneuil's house, after giving a careless look round about him. Corentin came down from his post, purposing to stop the peasant as he came out; but it suddenly occurred to him that if he could enter Mlle. de Verneuil's house at unawares, a single glance might possibly surprise the secret hidden in the messenger's basket. Popular report, moreover, had taught him that it was all but impossible to come off best in an encounter with the impenetrable replies that Normans and Bretons are wont to make.

"Galope-Chopine!" cried Mlle. de Verneuil, as Francine brought in the Chouan.

"Am I then beloved?" she added to herself in a low voice. An instinct of hope brought a bright color to her face, and put joy in her heart. Galope-Chopine looked by turns at the mistress of the house and at Francine, casting suspicious glances at the latter, until his doubts were removed by a sign from Mlle. de Verneuil.

"Madame," he said, "towards two o'clock *he* will be at my place, waiting for you."

Mlle. de Verneuil's agitation was so great that she could only bend her head in reply, but a Samoyede could have understood all its significance. Corentin's footsteps echoed in the salon at that moment. Galope-Chopine was not disturbed in the least when Mlle. de Verneuil's glance and shudder made him aware of approaching danger. As soon as the spy showed his astute countenance, the Chouan raised his voice to a deafening pitch.

"Yes, yes!" he said to Francine, "there is Brittany butter and Brittany butter. You want Gibarry butter, and only give eleven sous the pound for it! You ought not to have sent for me! This is really good butter," he said, opening his basket, and exhibiting two pats that Barbette

had made up. "Pay a fair price, good lady. Come, another sou!" There was no trace of agitation in his hollow voice, and his green eyes, underneath the bushy gray eyebrows, bore Corentin's keen scrutiny without flinching.

"Come now, my man, hold your tongue. You did not come here to sell butter; you are dealing with a lady who never drove a bargain in her life. Your line of business, old boy, will leave you shorter by a head some of these days."

Corentin tapped him amicably on the shoulder and continued, "You cannot be in the service of both Chouans and Blues at once for very long."

It took all Galope-Chopine's self-possession to choke down his wrath, and so prevent himself from rebutting this accusation, which, owing to his avarice, was a true one. He contented himself by saying:

"The gentleman has a mind to laugh at me."

Corentin had turned his back upon the Chouan; but as he greeted Mlle. de Verneuil, whose heart stood still with terror, he could easily watch the man in the mirror. Galope-Chopine, who believed that the spy could no longer see him, looked inquiringly at Francine, and Francine pointed to the door, saying:

"Come along with me, good man; we shall always manage to settle things comfortably."

Nothing had been lost upon Corentin. He had seen everything. He had noticed the contraction of Mlle. de Verneuil's mouth, which her smile had failed to disguise; and her red flush, and the alteration in her features, as well as the Chouan's uneasiness and Francine's gesture. He felt certain that Galope-Chopine was a messenger from the Marquis, caught at the long hair of the man's goatskins, stopped him just as he was going out, drew him back so that he confronted his own steady gaze, and said:

"Where do you live, my good friend? *I* want butter——"

"Good gentleman," the Chouan answered, "everybody in Fougères knows where I live. I am, as you may say——"

"Corentin!" cried Mlle. de Verneuil, breaking in upon Galope-Chopine's answer, "it is a great piece of presumption on your part to pay me a visit at this time of day, and to take me by surprise like this! I am scarcely dressed! Leave the peasant in peace, he understands your tactics as little as I understand your motives for them. Go, good fellow!"

Galope-Chopine hesitated for a moment before he went. The indecision of an unlucky wretch who cannot tell whom he must obey, whether it was real or feigned, had already succeeded in deceiving Corentin; and the Chouan, at an imperative gesture from Marie, tramped heavily away. Then Mlle. de Verneuil and Corentin looked at one another in silence. This time Marie's clear eyes could not endure the intensity of the arid glare that was shed upon her in the other's gaze. The determined manner with which the spy had made his way into her room, an expression on his face which was new to Marie, the dull sound of his thin voice, his attitude, everything about him, alarmed her. She felt that a secret struggle had begun between them, and that he was exerting all the powers of his sinister influence against her; but although at that moment she distinctly beheld the full extent of the gulf, and the depths to which she had consigned herself, she drew sufficient strength from her love to shake off the icy cold of her presentiments.

"Corentin," she began, with an attempt at mirth, "I hope you will allow me to finish my toilette."

"Marie," said he, "—yes, allow me to call you so—you do not know me yet! Listen! A less sharp-sighted man than I am would have found out your love for the Marquis de Montauran before this. I have again and again offered you my heart and my hand. You did not think me worthy of you, and perhaps you are right; but if you think that you are too much above me, too beautiful or too high-minded for me, I can easily make you come down to my level. My ambitions and my doctrines have inspired you with scanty respect for me, and, to be plain with you, you are wrong. The

value of men is even less than my estimate of them, and I rate them at next to nothing. There can be no doubt but that I shall attain to a high position, to honors that will gratify your pride. Who will love you better than I? Over whom will you have such an absolute dominion as over the man who has loved you for five years past. At the risk of making an impression upon you which will not be in my favor (for you have no idea that it is possible to renounce, through excess of love, the woman whom one worships), I will give you a measure of the disinterested affection with which I adore you. Do not shake your pretty head in that way. If the Marquis loves you, marry him, but first make quite sure of his sincerity. If I knew that you were disappointed in him, I should be in despair, for your happiness is dearer to me than my own. My determination may surprise you, but you must ascribe it simply to the prudence of a man who is not fool enough to wish to possess a woman against her will. I blame myself, moreover, and not you, for the futility of my efforts. I hoped to win you by dint of submission and devotion; for, as you know, for a long time past I have tried to make you happy, after my notions; but you have thought fit to reward me for nothing."

"I have endured your presence," she said haughtily.

"Say further that you are sorry to have done so."

"After you have committed me to this disgraceful enterprise, are thanks still owing to you?"

"When I proposed an undertaking to you, in which timorous souls might find something blameworthy, I had only your fortune in view," he answered audaciously. "As for me, whether I succeed or fail, I can now make every sort of result conduce to the ultimate success of my plans. If you should marry Montauran, I shall be delighted to make myself useful to the Bourbon cause in Paris, where I am a member of the Clichy Club. As it happens, any circumstance that put me in correspondence with the princes would persuade me to quit the cause of a Republic which is tottering to its fall. General Bonaparte is far too clever not to

perceive that he cannot possibly be at once in Germany and Italy and here where the Revolution is on the wane. He arranged the 18th Brumaire because, no doubt, he wished to obtain the best possible terms from the Bourbons, in treating with them as to France; for he is a very clever fellow, and has no lack of capacity. But politicians ought to get ahead of him on the road on which he has entered. As to betraying France, we who are superior to any scruples on that score, can leave them to fools. I am fully empowered—I do not conceal it from you—either to open negotiations with the Chouan chiefs or to extirpate them; for my patron Fouché is deep fellow enough, he has always played a double game. During the Terror he was at once for Robespierre and for Danton——"

"Whom you forsook like a coward!" she said.

"Rubbish," replied Corentin; "he is dead, forget him. Come, speak your mind frankly; I have set the example. The chief of demi-brigade is shrewder than he looks, and if you wish to elude the watch he keeps, I might be useful to you. So long as you stay here, beneath his eye, you are at the mercy of his police. You see how quickly he learned that the Chouan was with you! How could his military sagacity fail to make it plain to him that your least movements would keep him informed as to the whereabouts of the Marquis, if you are loved by Montauran?"

Mlle. de Verneuil had never heard such gently affectionate tones before. Corentin seemed to be absolutely sincere, and to put full trust in her. The poor girl's heart so readily received generous impressions, that she was about to intrust her secret to the serpent who had wound his coils about her. She bethought herself, however, that she had no proof whatever that this crafty talk was genuine, and so she felt no hesitation about deceiving the man who was watching her.

"Well," she answered, "you have guessed my secret, Corentin. Yes, I love the Marquis; but I am not loved by him, or at least, I fear not; so that the rendezvous he has made seems to me to hide some trap."

"But you told us yesterday that he had come with you as far as Fougères," Corentin replied. "If he had intended violence, you would not be here."

"Your heart is withered, Corentin. You can base cunningly contrived schemes on the occurrences of ordinary life, but you cannot reckon with the course of passion. Perhaps that is the cause of the aversion that you always inspire in me. But as you are so clear-sighted, try to understand how it is that a man from whom the day before yesterday I parted in anger is waiting eagerly for me to-day on the Mayenne road, at a house in Florigny, towards the end of the day——"

At this confession, which seemed to have escaped from her in a moment of excitement natural enough in a nature so passionate and outspoken, Corentin reddened, for he was still young; but furtively he gave her one of those keen glances that try to explore the soul. Mlle. de Verneuil's feigned revelation of self had been made so skilfully that the spy was deceived. He made answer with a semblance of good nature, "Would you like me to follow you at a distance? I would take soldiers in plain clothes with me, and we should be at your orders."

"I agree to it," said she, "but promise me, on your honor —Oh, no! for I put no faith in that; on your salvation—but you do not believe in God; on your soul—but perhaps you have no soul. What guarantee can you give me of your fidelity? And yet I am trusting in you, notwithstanding, and I am putting into your hands more than my life, or my love, or my revenge!"

The faint smile that appeared over Corentin's sallow features showed Mlle. de Verneuil the danger that she had just escaped. The agent of police, whose nostrils seemed to contract rather than to expand, took his victim's hand and kissed it with every outward sign of deep respect, and took leave of her with a not ungraceful bow.

Three hours later, Mlle. de Verneuil, who stood in fear of Corentin's return, stole out of St. Leonard's Gate and

took the narrow path down the Nid-aux-Crocs, which led into the Nançon valley. She thought herself safe as she went unnoticed, through the labyrinth of tracks which led to Galope-Chopine's cabin, whither she betook herself with a light heart, for the hope of happiness led her on, as well as a strong wish to save her lover from the dangers that threatened him.

Corentin, meanwhile, went in quest of the commandant. He had some difficulty in recognizing Hulot when he came upon him in a little square, where the commandant was deep in military preparations. Indeed, the brave veteran had made a sacrifice of which the merit can hardly be estimated. His queue had been cut off, he had shaved his moustache, and there was a trace of powder about his hair which was clipped as short as a priest's. He wore great iron-bound shoes, and had exchanged his old blue uniform and his sword for goatskins, a belt adorned with pistols, and a heavy carbine. Thus accoutred he was reviewing two hundred of the townsmen of Fougères, whose costumes might have deceived the eyes of the most expert Chouan. The martial fervor of the little town and of the native Breton character was very evident. There was no novelty about the spectacle. Here and there a mother or sister carried to a son or brother a gourd of brandy or pistols that had been forgotten. A number of old men were investigating the quality and quantity of the cartridges supplied to the National Guards thus metamorphosed into Counter-Chouans, whose high spirits seemed more in accordance with a hunting party than with a dangerous enterprise. The skirmishes of Chouannerie, wherein Breton townsmen fought with Breton peasants, appeared, in their eyes, to be a substitute for the tournaments of chivalry. Possibly this fervid patriotism had its source in certain grants of National property; but the benefits of the Revolution (which were better appreciated in the towns), as well as party spirit and a characteristic and innate love of fighting, all counted for something in bringing about their enthusiasm.

Hulot went through the ranks in admiration, making inquiries of Gudin, to whom he had transferred the friendship he had formerly entertained for Merle and Gérard. A crowd of townspeople, examining the preparations for their expedition, compared the appearance of their undisciplined fellow-countrymen with that of a battalion of Hulot's own demi-brigade.

Silent and motionless, the Blues stood drawn up in line, under the command of their officers, awaiting the orders of the commandant, whom the eyes of every soldier followed about from group to group. As Corentin approached the chief of demi-brigade, he could not repress a smile at the change that had been wrought in Hulot's face. He looked like a portrait which no longer bears any likeness to the original.

"What is the news now?" Corentin asked him.

"Come and fire a shot along with us, and you will know," the commandant replied.

"Oh! I do not belong to Fougères," answered Corentin.

"That is easy to see, citizen," said Gudin.

A mocking laugh broke out here and there among the groups of bystanders.

"Do you imagine," retorted Corentin, "that France can only be served with the bayonet?" He turned his back on the scoffers and went up to one of the women to inquire the purpose and the destination of the expedition.

"Alas! good sir, the Chouans are even now at Florigny! They say that they are more than three thousand strong, and that they are marching on Fougères."

"Florigny!" cried Corentin, turning pale.

"Then her rendezvous is not there! . . . Are they really at Florigny on the road to Mayenne?" he asked.

"There is only one Florigny," the woman answered, and as she spoke, she indicated the road that was cut short by the summit of La Pèlerine.

"Are you looking for the Marquis de Montauran?" Corentin asked the commandant.

"Rather!" Hulot answered shortly.

"Then he is not at Florigny," Corentin resumed. "Bring your own battalion and the National Guard to bear on that point, but keep a few of your Counter-Chouans with you and wait for me."

"He is too cunning to be mad," the commandant exclaimed, as he watched Corentin set off with hasty strides. "He is the very king of spies!"

Hulot immediately gave his battalion a signal to depart. The Republican soldiers marched silently and without beat of drum through the narrow suburb that lies on the way to the Mayenne road, forming a long streak of blue and red among the houses and trees. The disguised National Guards followed them, but Hulot stayed behind in the little square, with Gudin and a score of the smartest of the young men of the town. He was waiting for Corentin, whose enigmatical air had roused his curiosity. Francine herself told Corentin that Mlle. de Verneuil had gone out, and the keen-witted spy's surmise became a certainty. He started out at once in quest of any light that he could obtain as to this abrupt departure, which with good reason seemed suspicious to him. Corentin learned from the soldiers in the guard-house at St. Leonard's Gate that the fair stranger had gone down the path on the side of the Nid-aux-Crocs; he hurried to the Promenade, and unluckily reached it just in time to watch all Marie's slightest movements from his post of observation. Though she had dressed herself in a hood and gown of green, so as to be less conspicuous, the quick uneven movements of her almost frenzied progress among the hedges, now leafless and white with hoar-frost, readily betrayed the direction in which she was going.

"Ah!" he cried, "you should by rights be on the way to Florigny, and you are going down the dale of Gibarry! I am a fool after all. She has tricked me. Patience, though, I can light my lamp in the daytime quite as well as at night."

Corentin, who had all but detected the spot where the two

lovers were to meet, hurried back into the square just as Hulot was leaving it to rejoin his troops.

"Halt, general!" he shouted, and the commandant came back. In a brief space Corentin put the soldier in possession of the facts that seemed to be visible threads in a web as yet concealed from them. Hulot, struck with the diplomatist's astuteness, seized him by the arm.

"*Mille tonnerres!* you are right, citizen Pry! The bandits down there are making a feint! The two flying columns that I sent out to reconnoitre the neighborhood which lies between the road to Antrain and the road to Vitré have not yet come back. So we shall, no doubt, obtain reinforcements in the country which will come in handy, for the Gars is not such a fool as to venture out without his blessed screech-owls. Gudin," he went on, addressing the young Fougerais, "hurry off, and let Captain Lebrun know that he can do without me at Florigny; tell him to give the brigands there a dressing-down, and come back again in less than no time. You know the short cuts. I shall wait for you here to set out on a hunt for the *ci-devant,* and to avenge the murders at the Vivetière. *Tonnerre de Dieu!* how he runs!" he added, as he watched Gudin set off, and vanish as if by magic, "How Gérard would have liked that fellow!"

When Gudin came back he found the numbers of Hulot's little band increased. A few soldiers had been withdrawn from the guard-houses in the town. The commandant told the young Fougerais to pick out a dozen of his countrymen who were best acquainted with the risky trade of Counter-Chouan, and ordered him to make his way through St. Leonard's Gate so as to go over the whole length of that side of the hills of St. Sulpice which overlooked the main valley of the Couësnon, the side moreover on which Galope-Chopine's cabin lay. Hulot put himself at the head of his remaining men, and went out of the town through the gate of St. Sulpice, meaning to climb the hills and to follow the line of their crests, where, according to his calculations, he ought to fall in with Beau-Pied and his men, whom he intended to

employ in forming a cordon of sentinels who should watch the crags from the suburb of St. Sulpice as far as the Nid-aux-Crocs.

Corentin, feeling quite certain that he had put the fate of the Chouan chief into the hands of his bitterest foes, promptly betook himself to the Promenade, the better to grasp the whole of Hulot's military dispositions. He was not slow to perceive Gudin's little band, as it issued from the valley of the Nançon, and followed the line of the crags along the side of the Couësnon valley; while Hulot, breaking cover, stole under the walls of the castle of Fougères, and climbed the dangerous path that ascends to the summits of the hills of St. Sulpice. The two bodies of men, therefore, appeared in parallel lines. The rich tracery of hoar-frost that decorated every bush and tree had given a white hue to the countryside, which made it easy to watch the gray moving lines of the two small bodies of soldiers.

When Hulot reached the level heights of the crags, he called out all the men in uniform among his troops, and Corentin saw how they were posted, by the orders of the keen-sighted commandant, as a line of patrolling sentinels, with a sufficient distance between each man. The first man of the chain communicated with Gudin, and the last with Hulot, so that there was no bush that could escape the bayonets of the three moving lines which were to hunt down the Gars, over hill and field.

"The old war-wolf is crafty!" cried Corentin as the glittering points of the last bayonets disappeared in the *ajoncs*. "The Gars' goose is cooked! If Marie had betrayed this accursed Marquis, she and I should have had the strongest of all bonds between us—the bond of guilt. But she shall certainly be mine!"

The twelve lads from Fougères, under the command of Gudin, their sub-lieutenant, very soon reached a spot on the other side of the St. Sulpice crags, where they slope by degrees into the dale of Gibarry. Gudin himself left the road, and vaulted lightly over the *échalier* into the first field of

broom that he came across. Six of his fellows went with him, while the other six, in obedience to his orders, took the fields to the right, so that in this way they beat up both sides of the road. Gudin himself hurried to an apple-tree that stood in the midst of the broom. At the sound of the footsteps of the six Counter-Chouans, whom Gudin led through the forest of bushes, making every effort the while not to disturb the rime upon them, Beau-Pied and seven or eight men under his command hid themselves behind some chestnut trees that grew on the summit of the hedge, by which the field was surrounded. In spite of the white covering that enveloped the country, and in spite of their well-trained eyes, the lads from Fougères at first did not notice the others, who had made a sort of rampart of the trees.

"Hush!" said Beau-Pied, who had raised his head first, "here they are! The brigands have got ahead of us; but since we have them here at the ends of our guns, don't let us miss them, or, my word for it, we shall not even be fit to be soldiers to the Pope!"

Gudin's keen eyes, however, had at last discerned the barrels of the muskets that were pointed at his little party. Eight loud voices immediately shouted, "Who goes there!" a bitter gibe that was followed up at once by eight shots. The bullets whistled about the Counter-Chouans; one was hit in the arm, and another dropped. Five of the party who remained unhurt retorted with a volley, as they answered, "Friends!" and marched rapidly upon their supposed enemies, so as to come upon them before they could reload.

"We did not know that there was so much truth in what we said," the young sub-lieutenant exclaimed, as he recognized the uniforms and shabby hats of his demi-brigade. "We have acted in true Breton fashion, fighting first, and asking for explanations afterwards."

The eight soldiers stood dumfounded at the sight of Gudin. "Plague take it, sir, who the devil could help taking you for the brigands in those goatskins of yours?" cried Beau-Pied dolefully.

"It is unlucky, and none of us are to blame, for you were not told beforehand that our Counter-Chouans were going to make a sortie. But what are you about?" Gudin asked him.

"We are looking out for a dozen Chouans, sir, who are amusing themselves by breaking our backs. We have been running for it like poisoned rats, but our legs are stiff with jumping over these *échaliers* and hedges (heaven confound them!), so we were taking a rest. I think by now the brigands must be somewhere near the shanty you see over there with the smoke rising from it."

"Good!" cried Gudin. "As for you," he said to Beau-Pied, and his eight men, "fall back across the fields on the crags of St. Sulpice, and support the line of sentinels that the commandant has posted there. It will not do for you to stay with us, as you are in uniform. *Mille cartouches!* We want to put an end to the dogs; the Gars is among them! Your comrades will tell you more about it than I can. File to the left, and do not fire on half-a-dozen of our goatskins, whom you may come across. You can tell our Chouans by their cravats; they are wound round their necks without a knot."

Gudin left the two wounded men under the apple-tree, and went towards Galope-Chopine's house, which Beau-Pied had pointed out to him, guided by the smoke that rose from it. While the young officer had been put on the track of the Chouans by a chance fray common enough in this war, but which might have been much more serious, the little detachment under Hulot's command had reached a point in his line of operations parallel with that reached by Gudin on the other side. The veteran, at the head of his Counter-Chouans, stole noiselessly along the hedges with all the eagerness of a young man. He sprang over the *échaliers* lightly enough, even now; his tawny eyes wandered over the heights, and he turned his ear like a hunter towards the slightest sound. In the third field which he entered he saw a woman of thirty, or thereabouts, engaged in hoeing. She was hard

at work, and bending over her toil; while a little boy, about seven or eight years old, armed with a bill-hook, was shaking the hoar-frost from a few furze-bushes that had sprung up here and there, before cutting them down, and laying them in heaps. The little urchin and his mother raised their heads at the sound that Hulot made, as he came down heavily on the near side of the *échalier*. Hulot readily took the young woman for an old one. Wrinkles had come before their time to furrow the skin of the Breton woman's throat and brow; and she was so oddly dressed, in a well-worn goatskin, that if a skirt of dirty yellow canvas had not denoted her sex, Hulot would not have known whether the peasant was a man or a woman, for the long locks of her black hair were hidden away under a red woolen cap. The little urchin's rags scarcely covered him, and his skin showed through them.

"Hollo! old woman," said Hulot in a low voice, as he came up to her. "Where is the Gars?"

The twenty Counter-Chouans who followed him leaped the boundary into the field at that moment.

"Oh! to go to the Gars, you must go back to the place you have come from," the woman replied, after she had given a suspicious glance round at the men.

"Did I ask you the way to the suburb of the Gars at Fougères, old scarecrow?" Hulot answered roughly. "St. Anne of Auray! Have you seen the Gars go by?"

"I do not know what you mean," the woman answered, stooping to go on with her work.

"Do you want the Blues on our track to swallow us up, accursed *garce*?" shouted Hulot.

The woman raised her head at the words, and eyed the Chouans with fresh suspicion as she answered, "How can the Blues be at your heels? I have just seen seven or eight of them going back to Fougères along the road below there."

"Now, would not any one think that she had a mind to bite us?" asked Hulot. "There! look there, old nanny-goat!" The commandant pointed to three or four of his own sen-

tries, some fifty paces behind, whose hats, uniforms, and guns were easily recognizable.

"Do you want the men whom Marche-à-Terre is sending to help the Gars to have their throats cut? The Fougères people want to catch them!" he said angrily.

"Ah! I beg your pardon," the woman answered, "but it is so easy to make a mistake! What parish do you come from?" she asked.

"From Saint Georges," cried two or three of the Fougères men in Bas-Breton, "and we are perishing of hunger."

"Very well, stop a moment," said the woman. "Do you see that smoke yonder? My house is there. If you follow the track to the right, you will come out up above it. Perhaps you may meet my husband on the way. Galope-Chopine has to keep a look out, so as to warn the Gars; for he has come to our house to-day, you know," she added proudly.

"Thanks, good woman," Hulot answered. "Forward!" he added, speaking to his men. *"Tonnerre de Dieu!* We have him now!"

At these words the detachment followed the commandant at a run, down the footpath that had been pointed out to them. But when Galope-Chopine's wife heard the oath, which so little beseemed a Catholic, uttered by the supposed Chouan, she turned pale. She looked at the gaiters and goatskins of the lads from Fougères, sat herself down on the ground, and held her child in a tight embrace, as she said:

"May the Holy Virgin of Auray and the blessed St. Labre have mercy upon us! I do not believe that those are our people; their shoes have no nails to them. . . . Run along the lower road and tell your father about it. His head is at stake," she said to the little boy, who vanished among the broom and furze like a fawn.

Mlle. de Verneuil, however, had met no one belonging to either side upon her way; though Blues and Chouans were hunting each other in the labyrinth of fields that lay round Galope-Chopine's cabin. When she came in sight of the column of bluish smoke which rose from the half-ruined

chimney of the wretched dwelling, she felt her heart beating so violently that the quick vibrating throbs seemed to surge into her throat. She stopped, laid her hand on the branch of a tree to steady herself, and gazed at the smoke which was to serve for a beacon alike to the friends and foes of the young chief. Never before had she felt such overwhelming emotion.

"Ah! I love him too much!" she said to herself in a kind of despair; "perhaps to-day I shall have command of myself no longer."

She suddenly crossed the space that lay between her and the hovel, and came into the yard, whose muddy surface was now hard frozen. The great dog flew barking at her, but at a word from Galope-Chopine he ceased, and wagged his tail. As she entered the hut Mlle. de Verneuil gave a comprehensive glance round it. The Marquis was not there. Marie breathed more freely. She was glad to see that the Chouan had made an effort to restore some amount of cleanliness to the one dirty room of his den. Galope-Chopine seized his duck-gun, took leave of his visitor without uttering a word, and went out with his dog. Marie went after him as far as the threshold, and watched him turn to the right, when outside his cabin, into a lane, whose entrance was barred by the decayed trunk of a tree that was almost dropping to pieces. From the doorway she could see field beyond field. The bars across their openings made a sort of vista of gateways, for the bareness of the trees and hedges enabled the eye to see the smallest details in the landscape.

As soon as Galope-Chopine's great hat was quite out of sight, Mlle. de Verneuil went out and turned to the left to gain a view of the church at Fougères; but the shed hid it from her completely. Then she turned her gaze upon the Couësnon valley, which lay beneath her eyes like a great sheet of muslin; its whiteness made the lowering sky, with its gray snow clouds, seem heavier yet. It was one of those days when nature seems to be dumb, and every sound is absorbed by the air; so that although the Blues and Counter-

Chouans were traversing the country in three lines, in the form of a triangle that diminished as they came nearer and nearer to the cabin, the silence was so deep that Mlle. de Verneuil felt a trouble caused by her surroundings, and a kind of physical sadness was added to her mental anguish. There was calamity in the air. At last, in a spot where the vista of *échaliers* was screened off by a few trees, she saw a young man leaping over the bars like a squirrel, and running with wonderful speed.

"It is he!" she said to herself.

The Gars was dressed like any other Chouan. His blunderbuss was slung behind him over his goatskin, and but for his grace of movement he would have been unrecognizable. Marie fled into the cabin, acting upon an instinctive impulse as little explainable as fear; but almost immediately the young chief stood at a distance of two paces from her, before the hearth, where a clear and glowing fire was crackling. Neither of them could find a voice; each of them feared to move or to look at the other. One hope united their thoughts; one doubt held them apart—it was agony and it was rapture.

"Sir," said Mlle. de Verneuil at last, in an unsteady voice, "it is only a regard for your safety that has brought me hither."

"For my safety?" he asked, with bitterness in his tones.

"Yes," she replied. "So long as I remain in Fougères your life is imperiled. My love for you is too great to prevent me from going away to-night. You must not seek for me there again."

"You are going away, dear angel?—Then I shall follow you."

"You will follow me? How can you think of it? And how about the Blues?"

"Ah! Marie, my beloved, what connection is there between the Blues and our love?"

"But it seems to me that it is difficult for you to remain in France beside me, and still more difficult for you to leave it with me."

"Is there anything impossible for a lover who is in earnest?"

"Ah! yes. I believe that everything is possible. . . . Have I not had the courage to give you up for your own sake?"

"What! you give yourself to a horrible being whom you did not love, and you will not make the happiness of a man who worships you? A man whose life you would fill, who would swear to be yours for ever, and yours only? . . Listen to me, Marie—do you love me?"

"Yes," she said.

"Then be mine."

"Have you forgotten that I resumed my vile part of courtesan, and that it is *you* who must be mine? If I am determined to fly from you, it is in order that I may not draw down upon your head the scorn that may be poured on mine. Perhaps, but for that fear——"

"But if *I* fear nothing?"

"Who will convince me of it? I am distrustful. Who, in my position, would not be distrustful? If the love that each of us inspires in the other cannot last, let it at least be absolute, so that we may joyfully sustain the burden of the world's injustice. What have you done for my sake? You desire me. Do you think that that raises you very much above the level of others who have hitherto seen me? Have you risked your Chouans for an hour's happiness, taking no more thought for them than I once took for the Blues that were murdered when everything was lost for me? And what if I were to bid you renounce your ideas, your hopes, your king, of whom I am jealous, and who perhaps will deride you when you die for him, while I could die for you, as a sacred duty? How if I required you to make your submission to the First Consul, so that you might follow me to Paris? . . . How if I ordained that we should go to America, that we might live far away from a world where all is vanity, so that I might know whether you really love me for my own sake, as I love you at this moment? To sum it

all up in a word—if I set myself to drag you down to my level instead of raising myself to yours, what would you do?"

"Hush, Marie! do not slander yourself. Poor child, I have read your thoughts. If my first desire became passion, so my passion is now turned into love. Dear soul of my soul, you are as noble as your name, your soul is as lofty as you are beautiful; I know it now. My name is noble enough, and I feel that I myself am great enough to compel the world to accept you. Is this because I feel a presentiment of undreamed-of happiness without an end with you? Is it because I feel that I recognize in you the priceless qualities of soul that constrain us to love one woman for ever? I do not know why it is, but my love is infinite, and I feel that I can no longer live without you—that my life would be loathsome to me if you were not always near me."

"What do you mean by 'near you'?"

"Oh, Marie, you will not understand your Alphonse."

"Ah! Do you think to honor me greatly by offering me your name and your hand?" she asked in seeming disdain, fixing her steady eyes upon the Marquis, as if to detect his every thought. "And do you know whether you will love me in six months' time? And what would be my outlook then? . . . No, no; a mistress is the only woman who can be certain of the reality of the feeling that a man shows for her. Duty, and legal sanctions, and the world, and the common interest of children are but sorry aids to her power; for if it is lasting, her pride in it and her happiness will enable her to endure the heaviest troubles the world can give. To be your wife, and incur the risk of one day being burdensome to you? Rather than face that fear, I choose a transient love, but a love that is true while it lasts, though it should lead to death and misery in the end. Yes, better than any other, could I be a virtuous mother and a devoted wife; but if such sentiments are to dwell for long in a woman's heart, a man must not marry her in a fit of passion. Besides this, do I myself know that I shall care for you to-

morrow? No; I will not bring trouble upon you. I am about to leave Brittany," she said, as she noticed that he wavered. "I am going back to Paris, and you must not go thither in search of me——"

"Well, then, if on the morning of the day after to-morrow you see smoke rising from the crags of St. Sulpice, I shall be with you in the evening. I will be your lover, your husband, whatever you would have me be. I shall have dared all things."

"Oh! Alphonse," she cried in her intoxication, "do you love me so well that you will risk your life for me in this way, before you make it mine?"

He made no answer; he looked at her, and she lowered her eyes; but from his mistress' eager face, he knew that her fevered frenzy equaled his own, and he held out his arms to her. Carried away by this madness, Marie was about to sink back languidly upon Montauran's breast, determined that the surrender of herself should be an error that should bring her the greatest happiness, since in this way she risked her whole future, which would have been more certain if she had issued victorious from this final ordeal. But as she laid her head on her lover's shoulder, a faint sound echoed outside the house. She tore herself away from him as if she had been suddenly aroused from sleep, and sprang out of the hovel. This enabled her to recover her self-possession to some extent, and to think over her situation.

"He would have taken me, and perhaps have laughed at me afterwards," she said to herself. "Ah! if I could bring myself to believe that, I would kill him. Ah! not just yet!" she added, as she caught sight of Beau-Pied, and made a sign, which the soldier understood with wonderful quickness.

The poor fellow turned on his heel at once and made as though he had seen nothing. Mlle. de Verneuil went suddenly back into the hut, with the first finger of her right hand laid upon her lips in a way that recommended silence to the young chief.

"They are there!" she said, and her voice was low with horror.

"Who is there?"

"The Blues."

"Ah! I will not die without——"

"Yes, take it."

He clasped her, as she stood there cold and powerless, and pressed upon her lips a kiss full of rapture and of ghastly fear, for it might be at once the first kiss and the last. Then together they stood upon the threshold of the door, with their heads in such a position that they could watch everything without being seen. The Marquis saw Gudin at the head of a dozen men holding the foot of the Couësnon valley; then he turned and looked along the vista of *échaliers;* seven soldiers were on guard over the great rotten tree trunk. He climbed upon the cask of cider and broke a hole through the shingle roof, so as to spring out on to the knoll behind the house, but he quickly drew back his head through the gap he had just made, for Hulot, on the summit, had cut off the way to Fougères. He looked for a moment at his mistress, who uttered a despairing cry; for she heard the tramp of the three detachments who had met at last about the house.

"Go out first," he said; "you will save my life."

For her those words were sublime. Full of happiness, she went and stood in the doorway, while the Marquis cocked his blunderbuss. The Gars calculated the distance between the cabin door and the *échalier,* suddenly confronted the seven Blues, riddled the group with shot, and made his way through their midst. All three detachments flung themselves upon the *échalier* that the chief had just cleared, only to see him running across the field with incredible swiftness.

"Fire! fire! in the devil's name! You are no Frenchmen! Fire, you wretches!" thundered Hulot.

As he called these words from the top of the knoll, his own men and Gudin's troop fired a volley point blank, which,

luckily, was badly aimed. The Marquis had already reached the *échalier* at the other end of the nearest field, and was just entering the next, when he was all but overtaken by Gudin, who had flung himself after him in hot pursuit. When the Gars heard the footsteps of his formidable antagonist not many yards behind him, he redoubled his speed; but in spite of this, both Gudin and the Marquis reached the third *échalier* almost at the same time. Montauran adroitly flung his blunderbuss at Gudin's head, and struck the Counter-Chouan a blow that made him slacken his pace. It is impossible to describe Marie's agony of mind, and the intense interest with which Hulot and his troops watched this spectacle, each one unconsciously imitating the gestures of the two runners in a dead silence. The Gars and Gudin both reached the screen of copse, now white with hoar frost, when the officer suddenly fell back and disappeared behind an apple tree. Some score of Chouans, who had not dared to fire for fear of killing their leader, now appeared, and riddled the tree with balls. All Hulot's little band set out at a run to rescue Gudin, who, being without weapons, fled towards them from one apple tree to another, choosing the moments when the *Chasseurs du Roi* were reloading, for his flight. He was not long in jeopardy. The Counter-Chouans joined the Blues; and, with Hulot at their head, they came to the young officer's assistance just at the place where the Marquis had flung away his blunderbuss.

As they came up, Gudin caught a glimpse of his foe, who was sitting exhausted beneath one of the trees in the little copse; and leaving his comrades to shoot from behind their cover at the Chouans who were entrenched behind a hedge along the side of the field, he made a circuit round them and went in the direction of the Marquis with the eagerness of a beast of prey. When the *Chasseurs du Roi* saw his manœuvre they uttered fearful yells to warn their chief of his danger; then, after firing a round at the Counter-Chouans, with poacher's luck, they tried to hold their own against them; but the Counter-Chouans boldly climbed the bank

which served their enemies as a rampart, and took a murderous revenge. Upon this the Chouans made for the road that ran beside the enclosure in which the skirmish had taken place, and made themselves masters of the high ground, abandoned by a blunder of Hulot's. Before the Blues knew where they were, the Chouans had entrenched themselves among the gaps in the crests of the rocks; and thus sheltered, they could pick off Hulot's men in safety, should the latter show any disposition to follow them thither, and thus prolong the fight.

Whilst Hulot and a few of his soldiers were going slowly towards the copse in search of Gudin, the men of Fougères stayed behind to strip the dead, and dispatch the living Chouans, for no prisoners were made on either side in this terrible war. The Marquis being in safety, both Chouans and Blues recognized the strength of their respective positions, and the futility of continuing the struggle, so that neither party now thought of anything but of beating a retreat.

"If I lose this young man," Hulot exclaimed, as he carefully scanned the copse, "I will never make another friend."

"Oho!" said one of the lads from Fougères, "there's a bird here with yellow feathers," and he held up for his fellow-countrymen's inspection a purse full of gold pieces that he had just found in the pocket of a stout man in black clothes.

"But what have we here?" asked another, as he drew a breviary from the dead man's overcoat. "Here be holy goods; this is a priest!" he exclaimed, as he flung the breviary down.

"The robber! He will make bankrupts of us!" said a third, who had only found two crowns of six francs each in the pockets of the Chouan that he was stripping.

"Yes, but he has a famous pair of shoes," said a soldier, who made as though he would help himself to them.

"You shall have them if they fall to your share," a Fougerais answered, as he dragged them off the feet of the dead

Chouan, and flung them down on a pile of goods already heaped together.

A fourth Counter-Chouan took charge of the money, so as to divide it when the soldiers belonging to the party should return. Hulot came back with the young officer, whose last attempt to come up with the Gars had been as useless as it was dangerous, and found a score of his own men and some thirty Counter-Chouans standing round eleven of their dead foes, whose bodies had been flung into a furrow below the hedge.

"Soldiers!" Hulot shouted sternly; "I forbid you to take any part of those rags. Fall in, and look sharp about it!"

"It is all very well about the money, commandant," said one of the men, exhibiting for Hulot's benefit a pair of shoes out of which his five bare toes were protruding; "but those shoes would fit me like a glove," he went on, pointing the butt end of his gun at the pair of iron-bound shoes before him.

"So you want a pair of English shoes on your feet!" was Hulot's reply.

"But ever since the war began we have always shared the booty——" began one of the Fougerais in a respectful voice. Hulot broke in upon him roughly with:

"You fellows can follow your customs; I make no objection."

"Wait a bit, Gudin, there is a purse here, and it is not so badly off for louis; you have been at some trouble, so your chief will not object to your taking it," said one of his old comrades, addressing the officer.

Hulot, in annoyance, looked at Gudin, and saw him turn pale.

"It is my uncle's purse!" the young fellow exclaimed. Exhausted and weary as he was, he went a step or two towards the heap of bodies, and the first that met his eyes happened to be that of his own uncle. He had scarcely caught sight of the florid face, now furrowed with bluish lines, of the gunshot wound and the stiffened arms, when a smothered

cry broke from him, and he said, "Let us march, commandant!"

The Blues set off, Hulot supporting his young friend, who leaned upon his arm. *"Tonnerre de Dieu!"* said the old soldier. "Never mind!"

"But he is dead!" Gudin replied; "he is dead! He was the only relation I had left, and though he cursed me, he was fond of me. If the King had come back, the whole country would have wanted my head, but the old fellow's cassock would have screened me."

"What a fool!" remarked the National Guards, who stayed behind to divide the booty; "the old boy was well off, and as things fell out, he had not time to make a will to disinherit his nephew."

When the plunder had been divided, the Counter-Chouans started after the little battalion of Blues, and followed after them at a distance.

As the day wore away, there was a dreadful sense of uneasiness in Galope-Chopine's hovel, where life had hitherto been so simple and so free from anxiety. Barbette and her little lad went home at the hour when the family usually took their evening meal; the one bore a heavy burden of furze, and the other a bundle of fodder for the cattle. Mother and son entered the hut, and looked round in vain for Galope-Chopine. Never had their wretched room looked so large to them, nor seemed so empty. The fireless hearth, the darkness and the stillness all foreboded calamity of some kind.

At nightfall Barbette hastened to light a bright fire and two *oribus*— for so they call their resin candles in the country that lies between the shores of Armorica and the district of the Upper Loire, and the word is in use even on this side of Amboise in the Vendômois.

Barbette set about her preparations with the deliberation that characterizes all actions performed under the influence of deep feeling. She listened to the slightest sound; the wailing of the gusts of wind often deceived her, and brought

her to the door of her wretched hovel, only that she might go sadly back again. She rinsed a couple of pitchers, filled them with cider, and set them on the long table of walnut wood. Again and again she looked at her little boy, who was watching the baking of the buckwheat cakes, but she could not bring herself to speak a word to him. Once the little lad fixed his eyes upon the nails in the wall from which his father was wont to hang his duck-gun, and Barbette shuddered when she noticed, as he had also noticed, that the space was vacant. The silence was unbroken save for the lowing of the cows, and the sound at regular intervals of the drippings from the cider barrel. The poor woman sighed as she poured out into three brown earthenware porringers a sort of soup, made of milk, cakes cut into dice, and cooked chestnuts.

"They fought in the field that belongs to La Beraudière," said the little boy.

"Go and have a look there," his mother answered.

The little fellow ran off, and made out the faces of the heap of dead by the moonlight; his father was not among them, and he came back whistling joyfully, for he had picked up a few coins that the victors had overlooked and trampled into the mud. He found his mother busy spinning hemp, seated upon a stool by the fireside. He shook his head at the sight of Barbette, who did not dare to believe in any good news. It was ten o'clock by St. Leonard's Church, and the little fellow went to bed, after lisping his prayer to the Holy Virgin of Auray. At daybreak Barbette, who had not slept all night, gave a cry of joy as she heard a sound in the distance that she recognized; it was Galope-Chopine's step and his heavy iron-bound shoes, and he himself soon showed his sullen countenance.

"Thanks to St. Labre, to whom I have promised a fine wax-candle, the Gars is saved! Do not forget that we now owe three candles to the saint."

With that Galope-Chopine seized upon a pitcher and gulped down the contents without taking a breath. When

his wife had put the soup before him, and had helped him to rid himself of his duck-gun, he seated himself on the bench of walnut wood and said, as he drew near the fire, "How could the Blues and Counter-Chouans have come here? There was a fight going on at Florigny. What devil can have told them that the Gars was in our house? Nobody knew about it except us, and the Gars, and that pretty lass of his."

The woman turned pale.

"The Counter-Chouans made me believe that they were the *gars* from Saint Georges," she made answer, trembling, "and I myself told them where the Gars was."

Now it was Galope-Chopine's turn to grow pale; he set his porringer down on the edge of the table.

"I sent our little chap to warn you," the terrified Barbette went on; "he did not find you."

The Chouan rose to his feet and dealt his wife such a violent blow, that she fell back half dead upon the bed.

"Accursed *garce*," he said, "you have killed me!"

Then terror seized him, and he took his wife in his arms. "Barbette!" he cried, "Barbette! . . . Holy Virgin! My hand was too heavy!"

"Do you think that Marche-à-Terre will get to know about it?" she said, when she opened her eyes again.

"The Gars has given orders for an inquiry to be made, so as to know where the treachery came from," answered the Chouan.

"Did he tell Marche-à-Terre?"

"Pille-Miche and Marche-à-Terre were at Florigny."

Barbette breathed more freely.

"If they touch a single hair of your head," she said, "I will rinse their glasses with vinegar."

"Ah! I have no appetite now!" Galope-Chopine exclaimed dejectedly.

His wife set another full pitcher before him, but he gave no heed to it. Two great tears left their traces on Barbette's cheeks, and moistened the wrinkles on her withered face.

"Listen, wife. To-morrow morning you must make a heap of faggots on the crags of St. Sulpice to the right of St. Leonard, and set fire to them. That is the signal agreed upon between the Gars and the old *recteur* of Saint Georges, who will come and say a mass for him."

"Is he going to Fougères?"

"Yes. He is going to see his pretty lass, and on that account I shall have running about to do to-day. I am pretty sure that he means to marry her and to take her away with him, for he told me to hire horses and to have them ready all along the Saint Malo Road." Thereupon Galope-Chopine, being tired out, went to bed for a few hours, and afterwards went about his errands.

He came in again the next morning, having faithfully carried out the Marquis' instructions; and when he learned that Marche-à-Terre and Pille-Miche had not put in an appearance, he dispelled his wife's fears, so that she set out for the crags of St. Sulpice with an almost easy mind. On the previous evening she had made a pile of faggots, now white with rime, upon the knoll that faced the suburb of St. Leonard. She held her child by the hand, and the little fellow carried some glowing ashes in a broken sabot.

His wife and son had hardly disappeared behind the shed, when Galope-Chopine heard two men jump over the last of the series of *échaliers*. By degrees he made out two angular figures, looking like vague shadows in a tolerably thick fog.

"There are Pille-Miche and Marche-à-Terre," he said within himself, and trembled as the two Chouans showed their dark countenances in the little yard. Beneath their huge battered hats they looked not unlike the foreground figures that engravers put into landscapes.

"Good-day, Galope-Chopine," said Marche-à-Terre soberly.

"Good-day, M. Marche-à-Terre," Barbette's husband respectfully answered. "Will you come inside and empty a pitcher or two? I have some cold cakes and fresh butter here."

"That is not to be refused, cousin," said Pille-Miche, and the two Chouans came in. There was nothing to alarm Galope-Chopine in this beginning; he hastened to his great cider butt and filled three pitchers, while Marche-à-Terre and Pille-Miche, seated upon the polished bench on either side of the long table, cut slices of the cakes for themselves, and spread them with the rich yellow butter that exuded little beads of milk under the pressure of the knife. Galope-Chopine set the foaming pitchers full of cider before his visitors, and the three Chouans fell to; but from time to time the master of the house cast a sidelong glance at Marche-à-Terre as he eagerly satisfied his thirst.

"Pass me your snuff-box," Marche-à-Terre remarked to Pille-Miche.

The Breton gave it a few vigorous shakes, till several pinches lay in the hollow of his hand, then he snuffed the powdered tobacco like a man who wished to fortify himself for serious business.

"It is cold," Pille-Miche remarked, and rose to shut the upper part of the door.

The dim foggy daylight now only entered the room through the little window, so that only the table and the two benches were faintly visible, but the red glow of the firelight filled the place. Galope-Chopine had just refilled the pitchers and had set them before his guests; but they declined to drink, flung their large hats aside, and suddenly assumed a solemn expression. This gesture and the look by which they took counsel of each other sent a shudder through Galope-Chopine, who seemed to read thoughts of bloodshed lurking beneath those red woolen bonnets.

"Bring us your hatchet," said Marche-à-Terre.

"But what do you want with it, M. Marche-à-Terre?"

"Come, cousin, you know quite well that you are doomed," said Pille-Miche, putting away the snuff-box that Marche-à-Terre had returned to him.

Both of the Chouans got up together and seized their carbines.

"M. Marche-à-Terre, I did not say *one word* about the Gars."

"Get your hatchet, I tell you," was the Chouan's answer.

The wretched Galope-Chopine stumbled over his child's rough bedstead, and three five-franc pieces fell out on to the floor. Pille-Miche picked them up.

"Oho! the Blues have given you new coin!" cried Marche-à-Terre.

"I have not said one word; that is as true as that St. Labre's image stands there," Galope-Chopine replied. "Barbette mistook the Counter-Chouans for the gars from Saint-Georges; that was all."

"Why do you prate about your business to your wife?" Marche-à-Terre answered roughly.

"And besides, we don't ask you for excuses, cousin; we want your hatchet. You are doomed."

At a sign from his comrade, Pille-Miche helped him to seize the victim. Galope-Chopine's courage broke down when he found himself in the hands of the Chouans. He fell on his knees and held up his despairing hands to his executioners.

"Good friends," he cried, "and you, cousin, what will become of my little lad?"

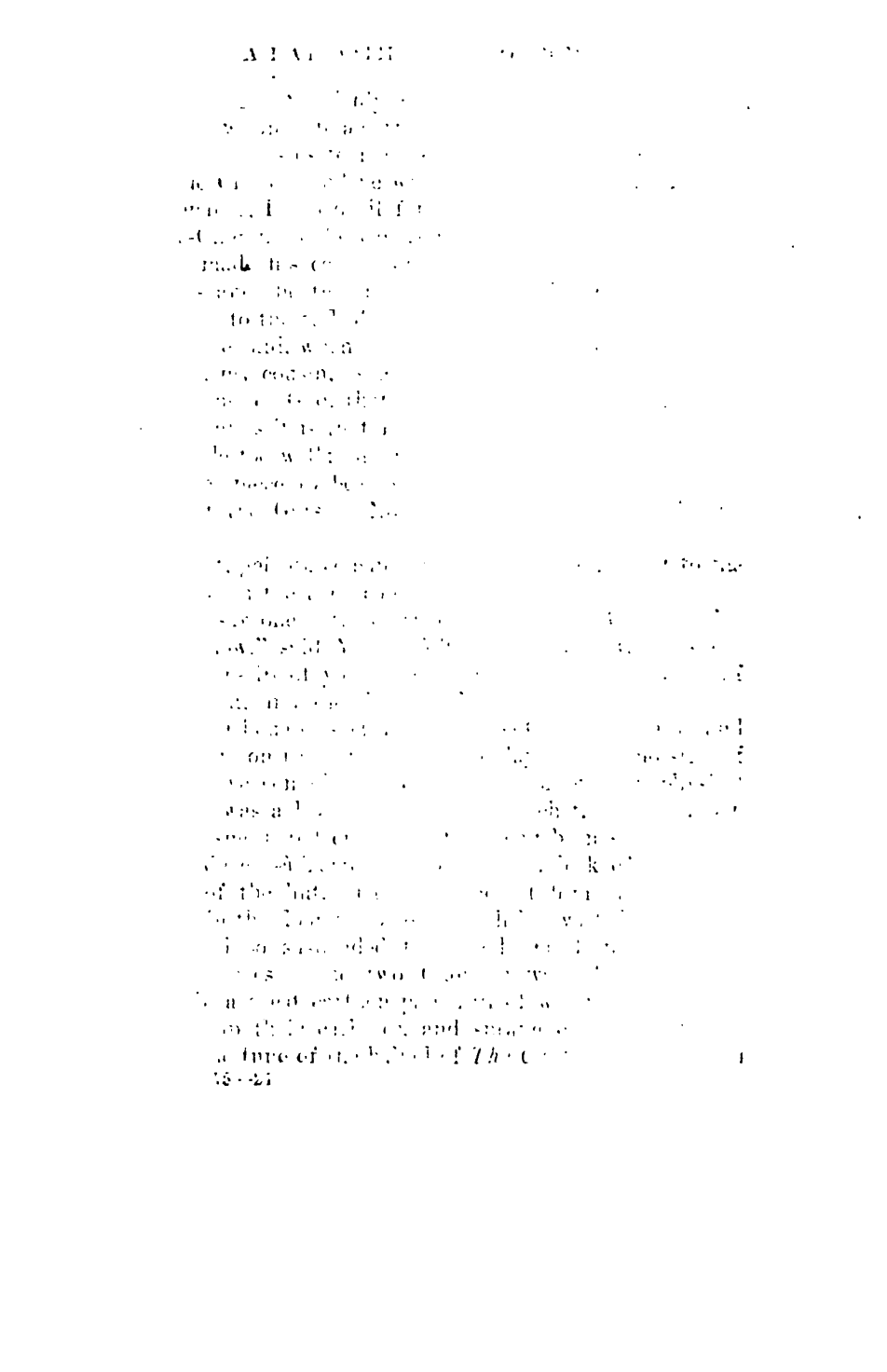
"I will look after him," said Marche-à-Terre.

"Dear comrades," Galope-Chopine began again with blanched cheeks, "I am not ready for death. Will you send me out of the world without shrift? You have the right to take my life, but you have no right to rob me of eternal bliss."

"That is true," said Marche-à-Terre, as he looked at Pille-Miche.

The two Chouans remained in this most awkward predicament for a moment or two, in utter inability to resolve the case of conscience. Galope-Chopine, meanwhile, listened to the slightest noise made by the wind, as if he had not yet lost all hope. He looked mechanically at the cider butt; the regular sound of the dripping leakage made him heave a

"Confess your sins to me"



melancholy sigh. Suddenly Pille-Miche clutched the sufferer's arm, drew him into a corner, and said to him:

"Confess your sins to me. I will repeat them to a priest of the true Church, and he will give me absolution; if there is any penance, I will do it for you."

Galope-Chopine obtained some respite by the way in which he made his confession; but in spite of the number of his sins and the full account which he gave of them, he came at last to the end of the list.

"Alas!" he said, when he had finished, "since I am speaking to you, my cousin, as to a confessor, I affirm to you, by the holy name of God, that I have nothing to reproach myself with, unless it is that I have now and then buttered my bread a little too well; and I call St. Labre over there above the chimney-piece to bear witness, that I have not said a word about the Gars. No, my friends, I did not betray him."

"All right, get up, cousin; you will explain all that to the *bon Dieu* when the time comes."

"Let me say one little word of good-bye to Barbe——"

"Come, now," said Marche-à-Terre, "if you want us not to think more ill of you than we can help, behave yourself like a Breton, and die decently."

The two Chouans seized on Galope-Chopine again, and stretched him on the bench, where he lay making no sign of resistance save convulsive movements prompted by physical fear; there was a heavy thud of the hatchet, and a sudden end of his smothered cries; his head had been struck off at a blow. Marche-à-Terre took it up by a lock of hair, and went out of the hut. He looked about him and found a great nail in the doorway, about which he twisted the strand of hair, and so suspended the bloody head, without even closing the eyes. The two Chouans washed their hands leisurely in a great earthen pan, full of water, put on their hats, took up their carbines, and sprang over the *échalier*, whistling the tune of the ballad of *The Captain*. At the end

of the field Pille-Miche began in a hoarse voice to sing some odd stanzas of the simple poem:

The first town that they came until
Her lover has lighted down,
And he has clad that bonny lass
In a milk-white satin gown:

The next town that they came until
He has lighted, her lover bold;
And he has clad her in white silver
And in the ruddy gold:

But when she came to his regiment,
So fair a maid to greet,
They have taken wels of the silken cloth
To spread them beneath her feet.

As the Chouans went further and further away, the tune grew less distinct; but there was such a deep silence over the countryside that a note here and there reached Barbette as she returned to the cabin, holding her little boy by the hand. No peasant woman can hear this song with indifference, so popular is it in the west of France. Barbette therefore unconsciously took up the earlier verses of the ballad:

We must away, bonny lassie,
For we have far to ride;
We must away to the wars, lassie,
I may no longer bide.

Spare thy trouble, oh, bold captain!
Save that treason give her thee,
She shall not be thine in any land,
Nor yet upon the sea!

Her father has stripped her of her weed
And flung her into the wave,
But the captain has swum out cannily
His lady-love to save.

We must away, bonny lassie, etc.

Barbette came into her yard just as she had reached the place in the ballad at which Pille-Miche had taken it up; her tongue was suddenly petrified, she stood motionless, and a loud cry, which she instantly repressed, came from her open mouth.

"Mother, dear, what is the matter?" asked the little one.

"You must go alone," cried Barbette in a choking voice, as she withdrew her hand from his, and pushed him from her with indescribable roughness. "You have a father and mother no longer!"

The child rubbed his shoulder, but he caught sight of the head as he cried, and, though his pink and white face was still puckered by the nervous twitch that tears give to the features, he grew silent. He stared wide-eyed for a long while at his father's head, with a stolid expression that revealed no emotion whatever; his face, brutalized by ignorance, at last came to wear a look of savage curiosity. At last Barbette suddenly took her child's hand in a powerful grip, and hurried him into the house. One of Galope-Chopine's shoes had fallen off when Pille-Miche and Marche-à-Terre had stretched him on the bench; it had lain beneath his neck, and was filled with blood. This was the first thing that met the widow's eyes.

"Take off your sabot," the mother said to her son, "and put your foot in that. Good! Always remember your father's shoe," she cried in piteous tones. "Never set a shoe on your foot without remembering how this one was full of blood that the *Chuins* spilt, and kill the *Chuins!*"

She shook her head so violently as she spoke, that the long locks of her black hair fell about her throat and gave her face a sinister look.

"I call St. Labre to witness," she went on, "that I dedicate you to the Blues. You shall be a soldier, so that you may avenge your father. Kill them! Kill the *Chuins,* and do as I do. Ah! they have taken my husband's head, and I will give the head of the Gars to the Blues."

She sprang to the bed at a bound, drew a little bag of

money from its hiding-place, took her astonished child by the hand, and dragged him forcibly with her, not even leaving him time to put on his sabot again. Then they both set out for Fougères at a quick pace, neither of them giving a look behind them at the cottage they were forsaking. When they reached the summit of the crags of St. Sulpice, Barbette stirred up her fire of faggots, and her little son helped her to pile on bushes of green broom with the rime upon them, so as to increase the volume of smoke.

"That will outlast your father's life, and mine, and the Gars' too!" said Barbette savagely, as she pointed out the fire to her child.

While Galope-Chopine's widow and son, with his foot dyed in blood, were watching the eddying smoke-wreaths with brooding looks of vengeance and curiosity, Mlle. de Verneuil's eyes were fastened on the crag. She tried, in vain, to discern the signal there of which the Marquis had spoken. The fog had grown gradually denser, and the whole district was enveloped in a gray veil that hid the outlines of the landscape, even at a little distance from the town. She looked with fond anxiety at the crags and the castle, and at the buildings that loomed through the heavy air like darker masses of the fog itself. A few trees round about her window stood out against the bluish background, like branching corals dimly seen in the depths of a calm sea. The sun had given to the sky the yellowish hues of tarnished silver, its rays shed a vague red color over the bare branches of the trees, where a few last withered leaves were hanging yet. But Marie felt an agitation of soul too delightful to allow her to draw dark auguries from this scene; it was too much out of harmony with the happiness to come, of which, in thought, she took her fill.

Her ideas had altered strangely in the past two days. Slowly the fierceness and uncontrolled outbursts of her passions had been subdued by the influence of the even warmth that true love brings into a life. The certain knowledge that she was beloved, for which she had sought through so

many perils, had awakened in her a desire to return within the limits in which society sanctions happiness—limits which despair alone had led her to overstep. A love that only lasts for the space of a moment seemed to her to betoken weakness of soul. She had a sudden vision of herself, withdrawn from the depths wherein misfortune had plunged her, and restored again to the high position in which she had been placed by her father. Her vanity awoke, after being repressed by the cruel vicissitudes of a passion that had met at times with happiness and again at times with scorn. She saw all the advantages conferred by an exalted rank. When she was married to Montauran, and came into the world (so to speak) as a marquise, would she not live and act in the sphere to which she naturally belonged? She could appreciate better than other women the greatness of the feelings and thoughts that underlie family life; for she had known the chances of a life of continual adventure. The responsibilities and cares of marriage and motherhood would for her be a rest rather than a burden. She looked forward longingly, through this last storm, to a quiet and virtuous life, as a woman tired of virtuous conduct might give a covetous glance at an illicit passion. Virtue for her possessed a new attraction. She turned away from the window, for she could not see the fire on the crags of St. Sulpice.

"Perhaps I have coquetted overmuch with him? But was it not in this way that I learned how well I was beloved? —Francine, it is a dream no longer! To-night I shall be the Marquise de Montauran! What can I have done to deserve such entire happiness? Oh! I love him—and love alone can requite love. And yet, it is God's purpose doubtless to reward me, because I have kept so much love in my heart through so many miseries; and to make me forget all that I have suffered, for I have suffered greatly, as you know, dear child."

"You, Marie! You to-night the Marquise de Montauran? Ah! until it is over and done, I shall think that I am dreaming. Who taught him to know your worth?"

"But he has not only a handsome face, dear child; he has a soul too! If you had seen him in danger, as I did! Ah! he is so brave, he needs must know how to love well!"

"If you love him so much, why do you allow him to come to Fougères?"

"Had we time to say a word to each other before we were surprised? Besides that, is it not one more proof of his love? Can one ever have enough of them? . . . Do my hair. He will not be here yet."

But stormy thoughts still mingled themselves with the anxieties of coquetry, and again and again she spoiled the carefully arranged effects, as her hair was dressed, by movements that seemed to be electric. As she shook out a curl into waves, or smoothed the glossy plaits, a trace of mistrust made her ask herself whether the Marquis was playing her false. And then came the thought that such baseness would be unfathomable, for in coming to seek her at Fougères he had boldly laid himself open to swift and condign punishment. She studied keenly in the mirror the effects of a side glance, of a smile, of a slight contraction of her brows, of a gesture of anger, scorn, or love; seeking in this way for a woman's wile that should probe the young chief's heart, even at the last moment.

"You are right, Francine," said she. "Like you, I wish that the marriage was over. This is the last of my overclouded days—it is big with my death or our happiness. This fog is detestable," she added, looking afresh at the summits of St. Sulpice that were still hidden from her.

With her own hands she arranged the curtains of silk and muslin that draped the window, taking a pleasure in shutting out the daylight, and so producing a soft gloom in the chamber.

"Take away those knick-knacks that cover the chimney-piece, Francine," she said; "leave nothing there but the clock and the two Dresden vases. I myself will put into them those winter flowers that Corentin found for me. Take all the chairs out of the room; I only care to keep the armchair

and the sofa; and when you have done these things, child, brush the carpet, to make the colors look brighter, and put candles in the sconces by the fireside, and in the candlesticks."

Marie looked long and closely at the ancient tapestry that covered the walls of the room. Her innate taste discovered among the vivid colors of the warp the hues which could serve to bring this decoration of a bygone day into harmony with the furniture and accessories of the boudoir—hues which either repeated their colors or made a charming contrast with them. The same idea pervaded her arrangement of the flowers with which she filled the fantastic vases about the room. The sofa was drawn up to the fire. Upon two gilded tables on either side of the bed, which stood near the wall opposite to the chimney-piece, she set great Dresden vases filled with leafage and sweet-scented flowers. More than once she trembled as she arranged the voluminous folds of green silk brocade about the bed, and followed with her eyes the curving lines of the flowered pattern on the coverlet which she laid over it. About such preparations there is an indefinable secret happiness, a delightful stimulation that causes a woman to forget all her doubts in the pleasure of her task, as Mlle. de Verneuil did at this moment. Is there not a kind of religious sentiment about the innumerable pains thus undertaken to please a beloved being, who is not there to behold them and to recompense them; but who must, later on, feel the significance of these charming preparations, and repay them with an approving smile? In moments like these, women give themselves up to love in advance, so to speak. There is not one who does not say to herself, as Mlle. de Verneuil said in her thought, "I shall be very happy to-night." The most innocent among them at such times sets this sweet hope in the least folds of the silk or muslin, and the harmony that she establishes about her steeps the whole of her surroundings in an atmosphere of love. All things in this delicious world of her creation become living beings and onlookers; she already makes them accomplices in her happiness to come. At each movement and at each thought,

she grows bold to rob the future. Soon her hopes and expectations cease, and she reproaches the silence. She must needs take the slightest sound for a presage, till doubt, at last, sets his talons in her heart, and she feels the torture of a burning thought that surges within her, and that brings something like a physical strain to bear upon her. Without the sustaining hope of joy, she could never bear those alternations of exultation and of anguish. Time after time Mlle. de Verneuil had drawn the curtains aside, hoping to see a column of smoke rising above the rocks; but the fog appeared to grow grayer every moment, until at last its grizzly hues affected her imagination, and seemed to be full of evil augury. In a moment of impatience she let the curtain fall, and vowed to herself that she would not raise it again. She looked discontentedly round the room for which she had found a soul and a language, asked herself whether her preparations had all been made in vain, and fell to pondering over them, at the thought.

She drew Francine into the adjoining dressing-closet, in which there was a round casement looking out upon the dimly visible corner of the cliffs where the fortifications of the town joined the rocks of the promenade.

"Little one," she said, "put this in order for me, and let everything be fresh and neat! You may leave the salon in disorder, if you will," she added, with one of the smiles that women keep for those who know them best, with a subtle delicacy in it that men can never understand.

"Ah! how lovely you look!" cried the little Breton maid.

"Eh! fools that we all are, is not our lover our fairest ornament?"

Francine left her stretched languidly on the sofa. As she went out slowly step by step, she began to see that whether her mistress was beloved or no, she would never betray Montauran.

"Are you sure about this yarn of yours, old woman?" said Hulot to Barbette, who had recognized him as she came into Fougères.

"Have you eyes in your head? There! look over there at the rocks of St. Sulpice, master, to the right of St. Leonard!"

Corentin scanned the ridge in the direction indicated by Barbette's finger; the fog began to clear off a little, so that he could distinctly see the column of pale smoke of which Galope-Chopine's widow had spoken.

"But when is he coming? Eh, old woman? This evening, or to-night?"

"I know nothing about it, master," Barbette answered.

"Why do you betray your own side?" asked Hulot, sharply, when he had drawn the peasant woman a few paces away from Corentin.

"Ah! my lord general, look at my lad's foot! See, it is dipped in my husband's blood! The *Chuins* butchered him like a calf, begging your pardon, to punish him for those three words that you got out of me when I was at work the day before yesterday. Take my gars, since you have made him fatherless and motherless, but make a thorough Blue of him, master, so that he may kill many *Chuins!* Look, here are two hundred crowns. Take charge of them for him. With care, they ought to last him a long time, for it took his father twelve years to get them together."

Hulot stared in amazement at the peasant woman. Her wrinkled face was white, and her eyes were tearless.

"But what will become of you yourself, mother? It would be better if you took charge of the money yourself."

She shook her head sadly. "I need nothing more now. You might clap me into the dungeons below Melusina's tower there" (and she pointed to one of the towers of the castle), "and the *Chuins* would find means to get at me and kill me there!"

She clasped her little lad in her arms, and her brow was dark with pain as she looked at him; two tears fell from her eyes, and with one more look at him she vanished.

"Commandant," said Corentin, "here is an opportunity, and if we mean to profit by it. we shall require two hard

heads rather than one. We know everything, and yet we know nothing. If we were to encompass Mlle. de Verneuil's house at once, we should set her against us, and you and I, and your Counter-Chouans, and both your battalions all put together, would be no match for that girl, if she has taken it into her head to save her *ci-devant*. The fellow is a courtier, and consequently he is crafty; he is a young man moreover, and mettlesome. We could never get possession of him as he enters Fougères; he may possibly be in Fougères already. And as for making domiciliary visits, the thing would be absurd! We should not take anything by it; it would give the alarm, and it would plague the townspeople."

"I shall order the sentry on guard at St. Leonard to lengthen his round by two or three paces," said Hulot, out of patience; "in that way he will come in front of Mlle. de Verneuil's house. I shall arrange for every sentinel to give a signal, and I myself shall wait in the guardhouse. Then when they let me know that any young man whatever has entered the town, I shall take a corporal and four men with me, and——"

"And how if the young man is not the Marquis after all?" said Corentin, interrupting the impetuous soldier. "How if the Marquis enters by none of the gates? If he is in Mlle. de Verneuil's house already? If—if——"

Corentin looked at the commandant with an air of superiority in which there was something so offensive that the old soldier exclaimed:

"*Mille tonnerres de Dieu!* Go about your business, citizen of hell! What is all that to me? If this cockchafer tumbles into one of my guardhouses, there is no help for it, but I must shoot him; if I hear that he is in a house, there is no help for it, but I must search the house and take him and shoot him. But the devil fetch me if I will cudgel my brains to soil my uniform——"

"Commandant, the letter from the three ministers orders you to obey Mlle. de Verneuil."

"Let her come to me herself, citizen, and then I will see what I will do."

"Very good, citizen," Corentin answered stiffly; "she will not be very long about it. She shall tell you herself the hour and the minute when the *ci-devant* comes. Possibly she will not be content until she has seen you post the sentries and surround her house!"

"He is the devil incarnate!" said Hulot, plaintively, as he watched Corentin stride back up the Queen's Staircase, where all this had taken place, and reach St. Leonard's Gate. "He is for betraying the citizen Montauran to me, bound hand and foot," the chief of demi-brigade went on, speaking to himself, "and I shall have the plague of presiding at a court-martial. After all," said he, with a shrug of his shoulders, "the Gars is an enemy of the Republic; he killed my poor friend Gérard, and in any case he is an aristocrat. But the devil take it!"

He turned quickly on his heel, and set out to go the rounds of the town, whistling the Marseillaise as he went.

Mlle. de Verneuil was steeped in those musings whose secrets lie buried, as it were, in the inmost depths of the soul; musings made up of numberless thoughts and emotions at war with one another, which have often proved to those who have suffered from them that a stormy and passionate life may be lived within four walls; nay, without even leaving the ottoman whereon existence is burning itself away. The girl who was now face to face with the catastrophe of a drama of her own seeking reviewed each scene of love or anger that had stimulated life so powerfully during the ten days that had elapsed since she first met the Marquis. While she mused, the sound of a man's footstep, echoing in the adjoining salon, made her tremble; the door opened, she turned her head quickly, and saw Corentin.

"Little trickster!" said the superior agent of police, "so you still have a mind to deceive me? Oh! Marie! Marie! you are playing a very dangerous game when you deter-

mine on the strokes without consulting me, and do not attach me to your interests! If the Marquis has escaped his fate——"

"It has been through no fault of yours, is not that what you mean?" said Mlle. de Verneuil with poignant irony. "What right have you to enter my house a second time?" she went on severely.

"*Your* house?" he queried in bitter tones.

"You remind me," she replied with dignity, "that I am not in my own house. Perhaps you deliberately chose it out, so that you might the more surely do your murderous work here? I will go out of it. I would go out into a desert rather than receive——"

"Spies—speak out!" Corentin concluded. "But this house is neither yours nor mine; it belongs to the Government; and as for leaving it," he added, with a diabolical glance at her, "you will do nothing of the kind."

An indignant impulse brought Mlle. de Verneuil to her feet. She made a step or two towards him, but suddenly came to a standstill, for she saw Corentin raise the curtain over the window, and the smile with which he asked her to rejoin him.

"Do you see that column of smoke?" he said, with the unshaken calmness which he knew how to preserve in his haggard face, however deeply his feelings had been stirred.

"What connection can there possibly be between my departure and those weeds that they are burning?" she inquired.

"Why is your voice so changed?" asked Corentin. "Poor little thing," he added in gentle tones, "I know everything! The Marquis is coming to Fougères to-day; and you had no purpose in your mind of giving him up to us when you set this boudoir in such festive array, with flowers and lights."

Mlle. de Verneuil turned pale. She read Montauran's death-warrant in the eyes of this tiger in human shape, and the love within her for her lover grew to frenzy. Every

hair of her head seemed to be a source of hideous and intolerable pain, and she sank down upon the ottoman. For a moment Corentin stood with his arms folded across his chest. He was half-pleased at the sight of a torture which avenged all the sarcasms and scorn that the woman before him had heaped upon his head, half-vexed to see a being suffer whose yoke he had liked to bear, heavily though it had lain on him.

"She loves him!" he said in a smothered voice.

"*Loves him!*" she cried; "what does that word signify? . . . Corentin, he is my life, my soul, my very breath——"

The man's calmness appalled her; she flung herself at his feet.

"Sordid soul!" she cried; "I would rather abase myself to obtain his life than abase myself to take it! Save him I will, at the price of every drop of blood in me. Speak! What do you want?"

Corentin trembled.

"I came to take my orders from you, Marie," he said, in dulcet tones, as he raised her with polished grace. "Yes, Marie, your insults will not check my devotion to you, provided that you never deceive me again. As you know, Marie, no one ever fools me and goes scathless."

"Oh! if you want me to love you, Corentin, help me to save him!"

"Well, when is the Marquis coming?" he said, forcing himself to ask the question calmly.

"Alas! I do not know."

They both looked at each other in silence.

"I am lost!" said Mlle. de Verneuil to herself.

"She is playing me false," thought Corentin. "Marie," he went on, "I have two maxims: one is, never to believe a word that women say—which is the way to avoid being gulled by them; and the other is, always to seek to discover whether they have not some motive for doing the very opposite of the thing they say, and for behaving in a fashion

the very reverse of the course of action which they are kind enough to disclose to us in confidence. Now, we understand each other, I think."

"Admirably," replied Marie de Verneuil. "You require proofs of my good faith; but I am holding them back until you shall give me proofs of yours."

"Good-bye, mademoiselle," said Corentin drily.

"Come," the girl said, smiling at him, "sit down. Seat yourself there, and do not be sulky, or I shall readily find means to save the Marquis without your aid. As for the three hundred thousand francs that are always spread out before your eyes, I can lay them there upon the chimney-piece, in gold, for you the moment that the Marquis is in safety."

Corentin rose to his feet, drew back several paces, and looked at Mlle. de Verneuil.

"You have grown rich in a very short time!" said he, with ill-concealed bitterness in his tones.

"Montauran himself could offer you very much more for his ransom," said Marie, with a pitying smile. "So prove to me that it is in your power to protect him against all dangers, and——"

"Could you not arrange for him to escape the very moment that he arrives," Corentin exclaimed suddenly, "for Hulot does **not** know the hour, and——"

He broke off as though he blamed himself for having said too much.

"But can it be that *you* are asking me for a stratagem?" he went on, smiling in the most natural manner. "Listen, Marie, I am certain of your good faith. Promise that you will make good to me all that I am losing by serving you, and I will see that that blockhead of a commandant shall sleep so soundly that the Marquis will be as much at liberty here in Fougères as in Saint James itself."

"I give you my word," the girl said, with a kind of solemnity.

"Not in that way, though," he said. "Swear it by your mother."

Mlle. de Verneuil shivered; then she raised a trembling hand and took the oath the man required of her. His manners underwent an instant change.

"You may do what you will with me," said Corentin. "Do not deceive me, and you will bless me this evening."

"I believe you, Corentin!" exclaimed Mlle. de Verneuil, quite softened towards him.

She bowed graciously as she took leave of him, and there was a kindliness not unmingled with wonder in her smile, when she saw the expression of melancholy tenderness on his face.

"What an entrancing creature!" cried Corentin, as he withdrew. "And is she never to be mine, never to be the instrument of my fortune and the source of my pleasures? To think that *she* should throw herself at my feet! . . . Yes, the Marquis shall die; and if I can only obtain her by plunging her in the mire, I will thrust her down into it. Yet, it is possible that she mistrusts me no longer," he said to himself as he reached the square, whither he had unconsciously bent his steps. "A hundred thousand crowns at a moment's notice! She thinks that I covet money. It is a trick of hers, or else she has married him."

Corentin did not venture to resolve on anything; he was lost in thought. The fog, which the sun had partially dispelled at noon, gradually thickened again, and grew so dense at last that Corentin could no longer see the trees, though they were only a short distance from him.

"Here is a fresh piece of bad luck," he said to himself, as he went slowly back to his lodging. "It is impossible to see anything six paces off. The weather is shielding our lovers. How is a house to be watched when it is enveloped in such a fog as this? Who goes there?" he called, as he caught an arm belonging to some unknown person, who had apparently scrambled up on to the promenade over the most dangerous places of the rock.

"It is I," was the guileless answer in a child's voice.

"Ah! it is the little red-foot lad. Do you not want to avenge your father?" Corentin asked.

"Yes!" cried the child.

"Good. Do you know the Gars when you see him?"

"Yes."

"Better still. Now keep with me, and do exactly as I bid you in everything, and you will finish your mother's work, and earn some big pennies. Do you like big pennies?"

"Yes."

"So you like big pennies, and you want to kill the Gars. I will take care of you.—Now, Marie!" Corentin said within himself after a pause, "you shall give him up to us yourself. She is too impetuous to think calmly over the blow that I mean to give her; and besides, passion never reflects. She does not know Montauran's handwriting; now is the time to set the snare into which her nature will make her rush blindfold. But Hulot is necessary to me if my scheme is to succeed. I will go and see him."

Meanwhile Mlle. de Verneuil and Francine were pondering devices for saving the Marquis from Corentin's dubious generosity and Hulot's bayonets.

"I will go and warn him!" the little Breton maid cried.

"Mad girl! do you know where he is? I myself, with all the instincts of my heart to guide me, might search a long while for him and never find him."

After devising a goodly number of the wild schemes that are so easily carried out by the fireside, Mlle. de Verneuil exclaimed, "When I see him, his peril will give me inspiration!"

Like all vehement natures, she delighted in leaving her course undecided till the last moment—trusting in her star, or in the ready wit and skill that seldom deserts a woman. Perhaps nothing had ever wrung her heart so violently before. Sometimes she seemed to remain in a kind of stupor, with her eyes set in a stare; sometimes the slightest sound shook her from head to foot, as some half-uprooted tree

quivers violently when the woodman's rope about it drags it hastily to its fall. There was a sudden loud report in the distance as a dozen guns were fired. Mlle. de Verneuil turned pale, caught Francine's hand, and said:

"I am dying, Francine; they have killed him!"

They heard the heavy footsteps of a soldier in the salon, and the terrified Francine rose to admit a corporal. The Republican made a military salute, and presented Mlle. de Verneuil with some letters written on soiled paper. As he received no acknowledgment from the young lady to whom he gave them, he said as he withdrew:

"They are from the commandant, madame."

Mlle. de Verneuil, a prey to dark forebodings, read the letter, which Hulot had probably written in haste:

"Mademoiselle," so it ran, "my Counter-Chouans have seized one of the Gars' messengers, who has just been shot. Among the letters thus intercepted is the one that I send, which may be of some use to you," etc.

"Heaven be thanked, it was not he whom they killed!" she cried, as she threw the letter into the fire. She breathed more freely, and eagerly read the note that had just been sent to her. It was from the Marquis, and appeared to be addressed to Mme. du Gua:

"No, my angel, this evening I shall not be at the Vivetière, and this evening you will lose your wager with the Count, for I shall triumph over the Republic in the person of this delicious girl, who is certainly worth a night, as you must agree. This is the only real advantage that I have gained in the campaign, for La Vendée is submitting. There is nothing left for us to do in France, and we will, of course, return to England together. But serious business to-morrow!"

The note slipped from her fingers. She closed her eyes and lay back in absolute silence, with her head propped by a cushion. After a long pause she raised her eyes to the clock and read the hour; it was four in the afternoon.

"And my lord is keeping me waiting!" she said, with savage irony.

"Oh! perhaps he could not come!" said Francine.

"If he does not come," said Marie, in a smothered voice, "I will go myself to find him! But, no, he cannot be much longer now. Francine, am I very beautiful?"

"You are very pale!"

"Look round!" Mlle. de Verneuil went on; "might not the perfumed room, the flowers, and the lights, this intoxicating vapor and everything here, give an idea of a paradise to him whom to-night I will steep in the bliss of love?"

"What is the matter, mademoiselle?"

"I am betrayed, deceived, thwarted, cheated, duped, and ruined. I will kill him! I will tear him in pieces! Oh! yes, there was always something contemptuous in his manner that he scarcely concealed, but I would not see it! Oh! this will kill me! What a fool I am!" she laughed; "he is on his way, and to-night I will teach him that, whether wedded to me or no, the man who has possessed me can never forsake me afterwards. My revenge shall be commensurate with his offence—he shall die in despair! I thought that there was something great in him; but he is the son of a lackey, there is no question of it. Truly, he has deceived me cleverly! Even now, I can scarcely believe that the man who was capable of giving me up to Pille-Miche without mercy could condescend to trickery not unworthy of Scapin. It is so easy to dupe a loving woman, that it is the lowest depth of baseness! He might kill me; well and good; but that he should lie to me, to me who had set him on high! To the scaffold with him! I wish I could see him guillotined! Am I so very cruel? He shall go to his death covered with kisses and caresses, which will have been worth twenty years of life to him."

"Marie," said Francine with angelic meekness, "be the victim of your lover, as so many another has been, but do not be his mistress or his executioner. In the depths of your heart you can keep his image, and it need not make you cruel to yourself. If there were no joy in love when hope was gone, what would become of us, poor women that we

are? The God of whom you never think, Marie, will reward us for having submitted to our lot on earth—to our vocation of loving and suffering."

"Little puss," answered Mlle. de Verneuil, as she stroked Francine's hand, "your voice is very sweet and very winning. Reason, when she takes your form, has many charms. How I wish that I could obey you!"

"You will forgive him? You will not give him up?"

"Hush! do not speak of that man any more. Corentin is a noble creature compared with him. Do you understand me?"

She rose to her feet. Her wild thoughts and unquenchable thirst for vengeance were concealed beneath the dreadful quietness of her face. The very slowness of her measured footsteps seemed to betoken the fixed purpose in her mind in an indescribable way. Devouring this insult, tormented by her own thoughts, and too proud to own to the least of her pangs, she went to the guard-house in St. Leonard's Gate, to ask to be directed to the commandant's lodging. She had scarcely left the house when Corentin entered it.

"Oh, M. Corentin," cried Francine, "if you are interested in that young man, save him! Mademoiselle will give him up. This wretched paper has ruined everything."

Corentin took up the letter carelessly. "Where is she gone?" he inquired.

"I do not know."

"I will hurry after her," he said, "to save her from her own despair."

He vanished, taking the letter with him, hurried out of the house with all speed, and spoke to the little boy who was playing about before the door.

"Which way did the lady go when she went out just now?"

Galope-Chopine's son went several paces with Corentin, and pointed out the steep road which led to St. Leonard's Gate.

"That way," he said, without hesitating, faithful to the

instinct of vengeance that his mother had inspired in him. While he was speaking four men in disguise entered Mlle. de Verneuil's house; but neither Corentin nor the little boy saw them.

"Go back to your post," the spy said. "Look as though you were amusing yourself by turning the latches on the shutters, but keep a sharp lookout in every direction, even upon the roofs."

Corentin sped in the direction pointed out by the child. He thought that he recognized Mlle. de Verneuil in the fog, and, as a matter of fact, he came up with her just as she reached St. Leonard's Gate.

"Where are you going?" said he, offering his arm to her. "You look pale; what can have happened? Is it fitting for you to go out alone in this way? Take my arm."

"Where is the commandant?" she asked him.

Mlle. de Verneuil had scarcely finished the sentence when she heard a reconnoitering party moving outside St. Leonard's Gate, and soon distinguished Hulot's deep bass voice among the other confused sounds.

"*Tonnerre de Dieu!*" he exclaimed. "I have never seen it thicker than it is just now when we are making the rounds. The *ci-devant* seems to have the control of the weather."

"What are you grumbling at?" said Mlle. de Verneuil, as she grasped his arm tightly; "the fog can hide vengeance as well as perfidy. Commandant," she went on in a low voice, "it is a question now of taking such measures in concert with me that the Gars shall not escape us this time."

"Is he in your house?" he asked, and there was a troubled sound in his voice that showed his astonishment.

"No," she replied; "but give me a man that can be depended upon, and I will send him to you, to warn you of the Marquis' arrival."

"What are you doing?" Corentin asked with eager haste. "A soldier in your house will scare him, but a child (I will find one) will not awaken suspicion——"

"Commandant," Mlle. de Verneuil resumed, "you can surround my house at once, thanks to this fog that you execrate. Post soldiers about it in every direction. Place a picket in St. Leonard's Church so as to secure the esplanade, which is overlooked by my windows. Post men on the Promenade itself; for though my window is twenty feet from the ground, despair sometimes gives strength sufficient to overleap the most perilous distances. Listen: I shall probably send this gentleman away through the house door; so you must give the task of watching it to none but a brave man; for no one can deny *his* courage," she said, heaving a sigh, "and he will fight for his life."

"Gudin!" cried the commandant.

The young Fougerais sprang forward. He had been standing in the midst of the knot of men who had returned with Hulot, and who had remained drawn up in rank at a little distance.

"Listen, my boy," the old soldier said in low tones, "this confounded girl is betraying the Gars to us. I do not know why, but no matter, that is not our business. Take ten men with you, and post them so as to guard the blind-alley and the girl's house at the end of it; but you must manage so that neither you nor your men are seen."

"Yes, commandant, I know the ground."

"Well, my boy," Hulot went on, "I will send Beau-Pied to you to let you know when the moment comes to be up and doing. Try to tackle the Marquis yourself; and if you can kill him, so that I shall not have to try him first and shoot him afterwards, you shall be a lieutenant in a fortnight, or my name is not Hulot. Here, mademoiselle," he said, as he pointed to Gudin; "here is a brave fellow who will flinch from nothing. He will keep a sharp look-out before your house, and whether the *ci-devant* comes out or tries to go in, he will not miss him."

Gudin set out with his ten soldiers.

"Do you clearly understand what you are about?" Corentin murmured to Mlle. de Verneuil.

She made him no answer. With a kind of satisfaction she watched the men start, under the orders of the sub-lieutenant, to post themselves on the Promenade, and yet others, who, in obedience to Hulot's directions, took up their position along the dark walls of St. Leonard's Church.

"There are houses adjoining mine," she said to the commandant; "surround them also. Let us not lay up matter for repentance by neglecting a single precaution that we ought to take."

"She is mad," thought Hulot.

"Am I not a prophet?" Corentin said in his ear. "The child I shall send to the house is the little gars with the bloody foot, so that——"

He did not finish. Mlle. de Verneuil had suddenly darted away towards her house, whither he followed her, whistling like a happy man. When he came up with her she had already reached her doorstep, where Corentin once more found Galope-Chopine's son.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "take this little fellow with you; you could not have a more guileless and active messenger."

Then he breathed (so to speak) the following words into the little lad's ear: "When you have once seen the Gars within the house, no matter what they say to you, run away, come and find me at the guard-house, and I will give you enough to find you in bread for the rest of your life." Corentin felt his hand squeezed hard by the young Breton, who followed Mlle. de Verneuil.

"Now, my good friends, come to an explanation whenever you like," cried Corentin, when the door was shut. "If you make love, my lord Marquis, it will be over your own shroud!"

Yet Corentin could not bring himself to go out of sight of that fatal house, and betook himself to the Promenade, where he found the commandant busily giving orders. Night soon came on. Two hours passed by, and still the different sentries distributed at their posts had seen nothing that could lead them to suspect that the Marquis had

come through the triple line of men, who were watching from their hiding-places along the three sides of the Papegaut's Tower by which access was possible. Corentin had walked from the Promenade to the guard-house a score of times, and each time his expectations had been disappointed, and his young messenger had not come to find him. Plunged in deep thought, the spy strolled slowly along the Promenade, undergoing the martyrdom to which three terrible conflicting passions subjected him—a victim to love, ambition, and greed of gold.

It struck eight on all the clocks. The moon rose late, so that the scene on which this drama of his own devising was about to come to a crisis was wrapped in appalling gloom by the darkness and the thick fog. The agent of police managed to suppress his passions; he locked his arms over his breast, and never took his eyes off the window that stood out above the tower like a gleaming phantom shape. Whenever his steps led him to the side of the Promenade nearest the valleys, along the brink of the precipices, he mechanically scrutinized the fog, with the long pale streaks of light flung across it here and there, from some window among the houses in the town or suburbs, above or below the fortifications. The deep silence that prevailed was only troubled by the murmur of the Nançon, by melancholy sounds at intervals from the belfry, or by the footsteps of the sentinels and the clank of weapons, when they came to relieve guard hour by hour. Everything, men and nature alike, had grown solemn.

"It is as dark as a wolf's throat," Pille-Miche remarked just then.

"Go along," replied Marche-à-Terre, "and keep as quiet as a dead dog."

"I scarcely dare draw my breath," the Chouan retorted.

"If the man who let a stone roll down just now wants my knife to find a sheath in his heart, he has only to do it again," said Marche-à-Terre, in so low a voice that it mingled confusedly with the murmur of the Nançon.

"Why, it was I," said Pille-Miche.

"Well, old money-bag, creep along on your belly like a snake, or we shall leave our carcases here before there is any occasion for it."

"Hi! Marche-à-Terre," the incorrigible Pille-Miche began again. He had laid himself flat on the ground, and was using both hands to hoist himself on to the path where his comrade was, and now he spoke in the ear of the latter in so low a voice that the Chouans following behind him did not catch a syllable that he said. "Hi! Marche-à-Terre, if we are to believe our Grande-Garce, there is a glorious lot of plunder up there. Will you go halves?"

"Listen, Pille-Miche!" said Marche-à-Terre, as, still flat on his stomach, he came to a stop, a movement imitated by the whole troop of Chouans, so exhausted were they by the difficulties of their progress up the steep sides of the precipice.

"I know you for one of those honest grab-alls, who are as fond of giving hard knocks as of taking them, when there is no other choice. We have not come here after dead men's shoes; it is devil against devil, and woe to them that have the shorter claws! The Grande-Garce sent us here to rescue the Gars. That is where he is, look! Lift up your dog's head and look at that window, up above the tower!" It was on the stroke of midnight as he spoke. The moon rose, and the fog began to look like pale smoke. Pille-Miche gripped Marche-à-Terre's arm violently, and pointed out, without making a sound, the gleaming triangular blades of several bayonets, some ten feet above them.

"The Blues are there already," said Pille-Miche; "we have not a chance against them."

"Patience!" replied Marche-à-Terre; "if I looked into it thoroughly this morning, there should be, somewhere about the base of the Papegaut's Tower and between the ramparts and the Promenade, a space where they are always heaping manure; one can drop down onto it as if it were a bed."

"If St. Labre would turn all the blood that will be shed into good cider, the Fougères people would find a very ample supply of it to-morrow," remarked Pille-Miche.

Marche-à-Terre laid his great hand over his friend's mouth; then the muttered caution that he gave passed from line to line till it reached the last Chouan, who clung aloft to the heather on the schistous rock. As a matter of fact, Corentin was standing on the edge of the esplanade, and his ears were too accustomed to vigilance not to detect the rustling noises made by the shrubs as the Chouans pulled and twisted them, and the faint sound of the pebbles that fell to the foot of the precipice below. Marche-à-Terre apparently possessed the gift of seeing through the darkness, or his senses had become as acute as those of a savage by being constantly called into play. He had caught sight of Corentin, or perhaps he had scented him like a well-trained dog. The diplomatist spy listened intently to the silence, and scanned the natural wall of the schist, but he could discover nothing there. If the hazy dubious light allowed him to see a few of the Chouans at all, he took them for fragments of the rock, so thoroughly did the living bodies preserve the appearance of inanimate nature. The danger to the troop did not last long. Corentin's attention was called away by a very distinct and audible sound which came from the other end of the Promenade at a spot where the buttress-wall came to an end and the sheer face of the rock began. A pathway that ran along the edge of the schist and communicated with the Queen's Staircase also ended at this point, just where the rock and the masonry met. As Corentin reached the spot, a form rose up as if by magic before his eyes; and when, feeling doubtful as to its intentions, he stretched out a hand to lay hold of the being (phantom or otherwise), he grasped the soft and rounded outlines of a woman.

"The devil take it, good woman," he muttered in a low tone; "if you had happened on any one else, you might have come in for a bullet through your head. Where do you

come from, and where are you going at this time of night? Are you dumb?"

"It really is a woman, at any rate," said he to himself.

Silence was growing dangerous, so the stranger replied in tones that showed her great alarm:

"Oh! I am coming back from an up-sitting, master."

"It is the Marquis' make-believe mother," said Corentin to himself. "Let us see what she will do."

"All right; go along that way, old woman," he went on aloud, pretending not to recognize her. "Go to the left if you don't want to be shot."

He stood motionless, till, seeing that Mme. du Gua turned in the direction of the Papegaut's Tower, he followed her at a distance with diabolical cunning. While this fateful meeting was taking place, the Chouans had very cleverly taken up their position on the manure-heap to which Marche-à-Terre had guided them.

"There is the Grande-Garce!" muttered Marche-à-Terre to himself, while he shuffled along the side of the tower as a bear might have done.

"Here we are!" he said to the lady.

"Good!" Mme. du Gua replied. "If you can find a ladder about the house or in the garden that comes to an end about six feet below the manure-heap, the Gars will be saved. Do you see the round window up there? It is in a dressing-room that opens out of the bedroom; and you must reach it. This side of the tower, at the foot of which you are standing, is the one side that is not surrounded. The horses are ready; and if you have guarded the ford of the Nançon, we ought to have him out of danger in fifteen minutes, in spite of his folly. But if that wench tries to follow him, stab her."

Corentin now perceived through the gloom that a few of the vague shapes which he had at first taken for rocks were moving stealthily; he went at once to the guard at St. Leonard's Gate, where he found the commandant fully dressed, but sleeping on a camp-bed.

"Let him alone!" Beau-Pied said roughly to Corentin; "he has only just lain down there."

"The Chouans are here!" cried Corentin in Hulot's ears.

"Impossible! but so much the better," said the commandant, heavy with sleep though he was; "there will be fighting at any rate!"

When Hulot came to the Promenade, Corentin pointed out to him, through the darkness, the strange position occupied by the Chouans.

"They have either outwitted or gagged the sentries that I posted between the Queen's Staircase and the castle," exclaimed the commandant. "By Jove! what a fog it is! But patience! I will send fifty men and a lieutenant round to the base of the cliff. We must not set upon them from above, for the brutes are so tough that they will let themselves drop to the bottom of the precipice like stones, and never break a limb."

The cracked bell in the church-tower struck two as the commandant came back to the Promenade, after taking the most stringent measures a soldier could devise for surprising and seizing Marche-à-Terre and the Chouans under his command. Every guard had been doubled, so that by this time Mlle. de Verneuil's house had become the central point about which a small army was gathered. The commandant found Corentin absorbed in contemplation of the window that looked out over the Papegaut's Tower.

"Citizen," said Hulot, addressing him, "it is my belief that the *ci-devant* is making fools of us all, for nothing has stirred so far."

"There he is!" cried Corentin, pointing to the window. "I saw a man's shadow on the curtains. But I do not understand what has become of my little boy. They have killed him or gained him over. Look there, commandant; do you see? It *is* a man. Let us go."

"*Tonnerre de Dieu!* I am not going to arrest him in bed. If he is in there, he is sure to come out; Gudin will

not miss him," replied Hulot, who had his own reasons for delay.

"Come, now, commandant; in the name of the law, I command you to advance instantly upon the house."

"You are a pretty fellow, at all events, to think to order me about."

The commandant's wrath did not trouble Corentin.

"You will obey me," he said coolly; "for here is an order drawn up in due form, and signed by the Minister of War, which will compel you to do so." He drew a paper from his pocket. "Do you really think that we are fools enough to let that girl act according to her own notions? We are stamping out civil war, and the greatness of the end in view justifies the littleness of the means employed."

"I take the liberty, citizen, of sending you to—— You understand? That is enough, then. Put your best foot foremost, and let me alone; and do it in less than no time."

"Read this first!" said Corentin.

"Don't plague me about your business," cried Hulot, furious at receiving orders from a creature in his opinion so despicable.

Galope-Chopine's son started up between the two at that moment like a rat out of a hole in the ground.

"The Gars is going!" he cried.

"Which way?"

"Along the Rue St. Leonard."

"Beau-Pied," Hulot whispered to the corporal, who was standing beside him, "run and tell your lieutenant to approach the house, and to keep up some nice little file-firing upon it; do you understand? File to the left, and march towards the tower," the commandant shouted to the rest of the men.

It is necessary, if the close of the drama is to be clearly understood, to return and to enter Mlle. de Verneuil's house with her. When the passions are excited to the highest pitch, the intoxication that they produce is far more com-

plete than anything effected by those paltry stimulants—wine and opium. The clearness of ideas to which we attain at such times, the subtle keenness of our over-excited senses, bring about the strangest and most unexpected results. Beneath the arbitrary sway of one sole thought, certain temperaments can clearly perceive the least perceptible things, while the most obvious matters are for them as though they had no existence. Mlle. de Verneuil had fallen a victim to the kind of intoxication which makes our actual existence seem to be like the life of a somnambulist. When she had read Montauran's letter, she had ordered all things in such a way that he could not escape her vengeance, just as eagerly as she had but lately made every preparation for the first festival of her love. But when she saw her house carefully surrounded, by her own orders, with a triple line of bayonets, a sudden gleam of light shone through her soul. She sat in judgment upon her conduct, and thought with a kind of revulsion that she had just perpetrated a crime. Her first uneasy impulse led her to spring to the threshold of her door, and to stay there motionless for a brief space, trying to reflect, but utterly unable to follow out a train of thought. She was so little aware of what she had just done, that she wondered why she was standing in the vestibule of her own house holding a strange child by the hand. Myriads of sparks like little tongues of flame swam in the air before her. She took a step or two to shake off the dreadful numbness that had crept over her senses, but nothing appeared to her in its true shape or with its real colors; she was like one that slept. She seized the little boy's hand with a roughness that was not usual to her, and drew him along so hurriedly, that she seemed to possess the activity of a mad woman. She saw nothing whatever in the salon when she crossed it, though three men greeted her, and stood apart to allow her to pass.

"Here she is!" said one of them.

"She is very beautiful!" the priest exclaimed.

"Yes," replied the first speaker, "but how pale and troubled she is——"

"And how absent-minded!" said the third; "she does not see us."

At the door of her own room Mlle. de Verneuil saw Francine, who whispered to her with a sweet and happy face, "He is there, Marie!"

Mlle. de Verneuil seemed to awake, and to be able to think; she looked down at the child whose hand she held, recognized him, and said to Francine:

"Shut this little boy up somewhere, and if you wish me to live, be very careful not to let him escape."

While she slowly uttered the words, she turned her eyes on the door of her room, on which they rested with such appalling fixity that it might have been thought that she saw her victim through the thickness of the panels. She softly pushed the door open, and closed it without turning herself, for she saw the Marquis standing before the hearth. He was handsomely but not too elaborately dressed; and there was an air of festival about the young noble's attire that added to the radiance with which lovers are invested in women's eyes. At the sight of him, all Mlle. de Verneuil's presence of mind returned to her. The white enamel of her teeth showed between the tightly-strained lines of her half-opened lips, which described a set smile that expressed dread rather than delight. With slow steps she went toward the young noble, and pointing to the clock, she spoke with hollow mirth, "A man who is worthy of love is well worth the anxiety with which he is expected."

But the violence of her feelings overcame her; she fell back upon the sofa that stood near the fire.

"Dear Marie, you are very charming when you are angry!" said the Marquis, seating himself beside her, taking her passive hand, and entreating a glance which she would not give. "I hope," he went on, in a tender and soothing voice, "that in another moment Marie will be very vexed with herself for having hidden her face from her fortunate husband."

She turned sharply as the words fell on her ear, and gazed into his eyes.

"What does that terrible look mean?" he went on, smiling. "But your hand is as hot as fire! My love, what is it?"

"My love!" she echoed, in a stifled, unnatural voice.

"Yes," he said, falling on his knees before her, and taking both her hands, which he covered with kisses; "yes, my love, I am yours for life."

Impetuously she pushed him from her, and rose to her feet. Her features were distorted; she laughed like a maniac as she said:

"You do not mean one word of it; you are baser than the vilest criminal!"

She sprang quickly towards the dagger which lay beside a vase, and flashed it within a few inches of the astonished young man's breast.

"Bah!" she said, flinging down the weapon, "I have not enough esteem for you to kill you! Your blood is too vile even for the soldiers to shed. I see nothing but the executioner before you."

The words came from her with difficulty, and were uttered in a low voice; she stamped her foot like a spoiled child in a passion. The Marquis went up to her and tried to clasp her in his arms.

"Do not touch me!" she cried, drawing back in horror.

"She is mad!" said the Marquis, speaking aloud in his despair.

"Yes, I am mad," she repeated, "but not yet so mad as to be a toy for you. What would I not forgive to passionate love! But that you should think to possess me without any love for me! That you should write and say so to that——"

"To whom have I written?" he asked in amazement, that was clearly unfeigned.

"To that virtuous woman who wished to kill me!"

The Marquis turned pale at this, and grasped the back of the armchair by which he was standing so tightly that he broke it, as he cried:

"If Mme. du Gua has been guilty of any foul play——"

Mlle. de Verneuil looked round for the letter and could not find it again—she called Francine, and the Breton maid came.

"Where is the letter?"

"M. Corentin took it away with him."

"Corentin! Ah! I understand everything now. That letter was his doing. He has deceived me, as he can deceive, with diabolical ingenuity."

She went to the sofa and sank down upon it, with a piercing wail, and a flood of tears fell from her eyes. Doubt and certainty were equally horrible. The Marquis flung himself at his mistress' feet, and clasped her to his breast, saying over and over again for her the only words that he could pronounce:

"Why do you weep, dear angel? What is the trouble? Your scornful words are full of love. Do not weep! I love you; I love you for ever!"

Suddenly he felt that she clasped him to her with superhuman strength, and in the midst of her sobs she said, "You love me still?"

"Can you doubt it?" he answered, and his tone was almost sad.

She withdrew herself suddenly from his arms, and sprang back two paces, as if in confusion and dread.

"If I doubt it?" she cried.

She saw the Marquis smiling at her with such gentle irony that the words died away on her lips. She let him take her hand and lead her as far as the threshold. Marie saw, at the end of the salon, an altar that had been hastily erected during her absence. The priest, who had resumed his ecclesiastical garb, was there; and the light upon the ceiling from the shining altar candles was sweet as hope. She recognized the two men who had before saluted her; they were the Comte de Bauvan and the Baron du Guénic, the two witnesses whom Montauran had chosen.

"Will you still refuse?" the Marquis asked her in a low

voice. But when she saw the scene before her, she shrank back a step so as to reach her own room again, and fell upon her knees before the Marquis, and raised her hands to him, and cried:

"Oh, forgive me! forgive! forgive——"

Her voice died in her throat, her head fell back, her eyes were closed, and she lay as if dead in the arms of the Marquis and of Francine. When she opened her eyes again she met the gaze of the young chief—a look full of kindness and of love.

"Patience, Marie! This is the last storm!" he said

"Yes, the last!" she echoed.

Francine and the Marquis looked at each other in surprise, but she enjoined silence on them both by a gesture.

"Ask the priest to come," she said, "and leave me alone with him."

They withdrew.

"Father," she said to the priest, who suddenly appeared before her, "when I was a child, an old man with white hair like you often used to tell me that if it was asked with a living faith, one can obtain anything of God: is that true?"

"It is true," the priest answered; "all things are possible to Him who has created all things."

Mlle. de Verneuil threw herself on her knees with incredible fervor.

"O God!" she cried in her ecstasy, "my faith in Thee is as great as my love for him! Inspire me! Work a miracle here, or take my life!"

"Your prayer will be heard," said the priest.

Mlle. de Verneuil came out to meet the eyes of those assembled, leaning upon the arm of the old white-haired priest. It was a profound emotion hidden in the depths of her heart that gave her to her lover's love; she was more beautiful now than in any bygone day, for such a serenity as painters love to give to martyrs' faces had set its seal upon her, and lent grandeur to her face.

She gave her hand to the Marquis, and together they

went towards the altar, where they knelt. This marriage, which was about to be solemnized two paces from the nuptial couch; the hastily erected altar, the crucifix, the vases, the chalice brought secretly by the priest, the fumes of incense floating beneath the cornices, which hitherto had only seen the steam of every-day meals, the priest, who had simply slipped a stole over his cassock, the altar candles in a dwelling-room,—all united to make a strange and touching scene which completes the picture of those days of sorrowful memory, when civil discord had overthrown the most sacred institutions. In those times religious ceremonies had all the charm of mysteries. Children were privately baptized in the rooms where their mothers still groaned. As of old, the Lord went in simplicity and poverty to console the dying. Young girls received the sacred wafer for the first time on the spot where they had been playing only the night before. The marriage of the Marquis and Mlle. de Verneuil was about to be solemnized, like so many other marriages, with an act forbidden by the new Legislation; but all these marriages, celebrated for the most part beneath the oak trees, were afterwards scrupulously sanctioned by law. The priest who thus preserved the ancient usages to the last was one of those men who are faithful to their principles in the height of the storm. His voice, guiltless of the oath required by the Republic, only breathed words of peace through the tempest. He did not stir up the fires of insurrection, as the Abbé Gudin had been wont to do; but he had devoted himself, like many others, to the dangerous task of fulfilling the duties of the priest towards such souls as remained faithful to the Catholic Church. In order to carry out his perilous mission successfully, he made use of all the pious artifices to which persecution compelled him to resort; so that the Marquis had only succeeded in finding him in one of those underground hiding-places which bear the name of "The Priest's Hole," even in our own day. The sight of his pale worn face inspired such devout feelings and respect in others, that it transformed the worldly aspect of the

salon, and made it seem like a holy place. Everything was in readiness for the act that should bring misfortune and joy. In the deep silence before the ceremony began the priest asked for the name of the bride.

"Marie-Nathalie, daughter of Mlle. Blanche de Castéran, late Abbess of Notre-Dame de Séez, and of Victor-Amédée, Duc de Verneuil."

"Born?"

"At la Chasterie, near Alençon."

"I should not have thought that Montauran would have been fool enough to marry her," the Baron whispered to the Count. "The natural daughter of a duke! Out upon it!"

"If she had been a king's daughter, he might have been excused," the Comte de Bauvan said, with a smile, "but I am not the one to blame him. I have a liking for the other, and I mean to lay siege to Charette's Filly now. There is not much coo about *her!*"

Montauran's designations had been previously filled in, the lovers set their names to the document, and the names of the witnesses followed. The ceremony began, and all the while no one but Marie heard the sound of arms and the heavy even tread of the soldiers coming to relieve the Blues, who were, doubtless, on guard before St. Leonard's church, where she herself had posted them. She shuddered and raised her eyes to the crucifix upon the altar.

"She is a saint!" murmured Francine.

"Give me saints of that sort, and I will turn deucedly devout," the Count said to himself, in a low voice.

When the priest put the usual question to Mlle. de Verneuil, her answering "Yes" came with a heavy sigh. She leaned over, and said in her husband's ear, "In a little while you will know why I break the vow that I made never to marry you."

The rite was over, and those who had been present passed out into the room where dinner had been served, when, just as the guests were sitting down, Jeremiah came in in a

state of great terror. The unhappy bride rose at once and went up to him, followed by Francine. Then making one of the excuses that women can devise so readily, she begged the Marquis to do the honors of the feast by himself for a few moments; and hurried the servant away before he could commit any blunder that might prove fatal.

"Oh! Francine," she said, "what a thing it is to feel oneself at the brink of death, and to be unable to say 'I am dying!'"

Mlle. de Verneuil did not return. An excuse for her absence could be found in the ceremony that had just been concluded. When the meal came to an end, and the Marquis' anxiety had risen to its height, Marie came back in all the splendor of her bridal array. She looked calm and happy; while Francine, who had returned with her, bore traces of such profound terror on all her features, that those assembled seemed to see in the faces of the two women some such strange picture as the eccentric brush of Salvator Rosa might have painted, representing Death and Life holding each other by the hand.

"Gentlemen," she said, addressing the priest, the Baron, and the Count, "you must be my guests to-night. Any attempt to leave Fougères would be too hazardous. I have given orders to this good girl here to conduct each of you to his own room. No resistance, I beg," she said, as the priest was about to speak; "I hope that you will not refuse to obey a bride on her wedding day."

An hour later she was alone with her husband in the bridal chamber that she had made so fair. They stood at last beside the fatal couch where so many hopes are blighted as by the tomb, where the chances of awakening to a happy life are so uncertain, where love dies or comes into being according to the power of the character that is only finally tested there. Marie looked at the clock, and said to herself, "Six hours to live!"

"So I have been able to sleep!" she exclaimed when, as morning drew near, she woke with the shock of the sudden

start that disturbs us when we have agreed with ourselves on the previous evening to wake at a certain hour. "Yes," I have slept," she repeated, as she saw by the candle-light that the hand on the dial of the clock pointed to the hour of two. She turned and gazed at the Marquis, who was sleeping with one hand beneath his head, as children do, while the other hand grasped that of his wife. He was half-smiling, as though he had fallen asleep in the midst of a kiss. "Ah!" she murmured to herself, "he is slumbering like a child! But how could he feel mistrust of me, of me who owe him unspeakable happiness?"

She touched him gently, he awoke and smiled in earnest. He kissed the hand that he held, and gazed at the unhappy woman before him with such glowing eyes, that she could not endure the passionate light in them, and slowly drooped her heavy eyelids as if to shut out a spectacle fraught with peril for her. But while she thus veiled the growing warmth of her own eyes, she so provoked the desire to which she appeared to refuse herself, that if she had not had a profound dread to conceal, her husband might have reproached her with too much coquetry. They both raised their charming heads at the same moment, with a sign full of gratitude for the pleasures that they had experienced. But after a moment's survey of the exquisite picture presented by his wife's face, the Marquis, thinking that Marie's brow was overshadowed by some feeling of melancholy, said to her softly:

"Why that shade of sadness, love?"

"Poor Alphonse, whither do you think I have brought you?" she asked, trembling.

"To happiness."

"Nay, to death."

Quivering with horror, she sprang out of bed, followed by the astonished Marquis. His wife led him to the window. A frenzied gesture escaped Marie as she drew back the curtains and pointed to a score of soldiers in the square. The fog had dispersed, and the white moonlight fell on

their uniforms and muskets, on the imperturbable Corentin, who came and went like a jackal on the lookout for his prey, and on the commandant, who stood there motionless with folded arms, with his head thrown back, and his mouth pursed up, in an alert and uneasy attitude.

"Let them be, Marie, and come back."

"Why do you laugh, Alphonse? It was *I* who posted them there."

"You are dreaming."

"Nay."

For a moment they looked at each other, and the Marquis understood it all. He clasped her in his arms. "What of that," he said; "I love you for ever."

"All is not lost, even now!" cried Marie. "Alphonse!" she said, after a pause, "there is yet hope!"

Just then they distinctly heard the stifled cry of a screech-owl, and Francine suddenly entered from the dressing-room.

"Pierre is there!" she cried, in almost frenzied joy.

The Marquise and Francine dressed Montauran in a Chouan's costume with the marvelous quickness that women alone possess. When Marie saw that her husband was busy loading the firearms that Francine had brought for him, she quickly slipped away, making a sign to her faithful Breton maid. Francine led the Marquis into the adjoining dressing-room. At the sight of a number of sheets securely knotted together, the young chief could appreciate the alert activity with which the Breton girl had done her work, as she sought to disappoint the watchfulness of the soldiers.

"I can never get through," the Marquis said, as he made a survey of the narrow embrasure of the round window. But the circular opening was just then blocked up by a great dark countenance; and the hoarse voice, that Francine knew so well, cried softly:

"Quick, general! Those toads of Blues are on the move!"

"Oh! one more kiss," said a sweet and trembling voice.

Montauran's feet were set on the ladder by which he was to escape, but he had not yet extricated himself from the window, and felt himself clasped in a desperate embrace. He uttered a cry, for he saw that his wife had dressed herself in his clothes, and tried to hold her fast, but she tore herself hastily from his arms, and he was obliged to descend the ladder. In his hand he kept a scrap of some woven material, and a sudden gleam of moonlight showed him that it must be a strip of the waistcoat that he had worn on the previous evening.

"Halt! Fire by platoons!"

Hulot's words spoken broke the deep stillness that had something hideous about it, and snapped the charm that seemed hitherto to have prevailed over the place and the men in it. The sound of a salvo of balls at the base of the tower in the valley bottom followed hard upon the firing of the Blues upon the Promenade. Volley succeeded volley without interruption; the Republicans kept up their fire, mercilessly; but no sound was uttered by the victims—there was a horrible silence between each discharge.

Corentin, however, suspected some trap, for he had heard one of the men, whom he had pointed out to the commandant, drop from his lofty position at the top of the ladder.

"Not one of those animals makes a sound," he remarked to Hulot. "Our pair of lovers are quite capable of keeping us amused by some sort of trick, while they themselves are perhaps escaping in some other direction."

The spy, in his eagerness to obtain light on this mystery, sent Galope-Chopine's child to find some torches. Hulot had caught the drift of Corentin's suspicions so aptly that the old soldier, who was preoccupied with the sounds of an obstinate encounter that was taking place before the guard-house in St. Leonard's Gate, exclaimed, "True, there cannot be two of them," and rushed off in that direction.

"We have given him a leaden shower-bath, commandant," so Beau-Pied greeted his commandant, "but he has killed

Gudin, and wounded two more men. Ah! the madman. He had broken through three lines of our fellows, and would have got away into the open country, if it had not been for the sentry at St. Leonard's Gate, who spitted him on his bayonet."

The commandant hurried into the guard-house on hearing this piece of news, and saw a blood-stained body stretched out upon the camp-bed where it had just been laid. He went up to the man whom he believed to be the Marquis, raised the hat that covered his face, and dropped into a chair.

"I thought so," he cried vehemently, as he folded his arms. "*Sacré tonnerre!* she had kept him too long."

The soldiers stood about, motionless. The commandant's movement had uncoiled a woman's long dark hair.

The silence was suddenly broken by the sounds of a crowd of armed men. Corentin came into the guard-house, followed by four men, who had made a kind of stretcher of their muskets, upon which they were carrying Montauran, whose legs and arms had been broken by many gunshots. They laid the Marquis on the camp-bed beside his wife. He saw her, and found strength sufficient to take her hand in a convulsive clasp. The dying girl turned her head painfully, recognized her husband, and a sudden spasm shook her that was terrible to see, as she murmured in a nearly inaudible voice:

"A day without a morrow! . . . God has heard me indeed!"

"Commandant," said the Marquis, summoning all his strength to speak, while he still held Marie's hand in his, "I depend upon your loyalty to send word of my death to my young brother in London. Write to him, and tell him that if he would fain obey my last wishes, he will not bear arms against France; but he will never forsake the service of the King."

"It shall be done," said Hulot, pressing the hand of the dying man.

"Take them to the hospital near-by," cried Corentin.

Hulot grasped the spy by the arm in such a sort that he left the marks of his nails in the flesh as he said to him:

"Since your task here is ended, be off! And take a good look at the face of Commandant Hulot, so that you may never cross his path again, unless you have a mind to have his cutlass through your body."

The old soldier drew his sabre as he spoke.

"There is another of your honest folk who will never make their fortunes," said Corentin to himself, when he was well away from the guard-house.

The Marquis was still able to thank his enemy by a movement of his head, expressing a soldier's esteem for a generous foe.

In 1827 an old man, accompanied by his wife, was bargaining for cattle in the market of Fougères. Nobody took any special heed of him, though in his time he had killed more than a hundred men. No one ever reminded him of his nickname of Marche-à-Terre. The person to whom valuable information concerning the actors in this drama is owing saw the man as he led a cow away; there was that look of homely simplicity about him which prompts the remark, "That is a very honest fellow!"

As for Cibot, otherwise called Pille-Miche, his end has been witnessed already. Perhaps Marche-à-Terre made a vain attempt to rescue his comrade from the scaffold, and was present in the market place of Alençon at the terrific riot that occurred during the famous trials of Rifoël, Bryond, and La Chanterie.

A PASSION IN THE DESERT

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A PASSION IN THE DESERT

"THE whole show is dreadful," she cried, coming out of the menagerie of M. Martin. She had just been looking at that daring speculator "working with his hyena,"—to speak in the style of the programme.

"By what means," she continued, "can he have tamed these animals to such a point as to be certain of their affection for——"

"What seems to you a problem," said I, interrupting, "is really quite natural."

"Oh!" she cried, letting an incredulous smile wander over her lips.

"You think that beasts are wholly without passions?" I asked her. "Quite the reverse; we can communicate to them all the vices arising in our own state of civilization."

She looked at me with an air of astonishment.

"But," I continued, "the first time I saw M. Martin, I admit, like you, I did give vent to an exclamation of surprise. I found myself next to an old soldier with the right leg amputated, who had come in with me. His face had struck me. He had one of those heroic heads, stamped with the seal of warfare, and on which the battles of Napoleon are written. Besides, he had that frank, good-humored expression which always impresses me favorably. He was without doubt one of those troopers who are surprised at nothing, who find matter for laughter in the contortions of a dying comrade, who bury or plunder him quite light-heartedly, who stand intrepidly in the way of bullets;—in fact, one of those men who waste no time in deliberation, and would not hesitate to make friends with the devil himself. After looking very attentively at the proprietor of the menagerie getting out of his box, my companion pursed up his lips with an air

of mockery and contempt, with that peculiar and expressive twist which superior people assume to show they are not taken in. Then, when I was expatiating on the courage of M. Martin, he smiled, shook his head knowingly, and said, 'Well known.'"

"'How "well known"?' I said. 'If you would only explain me the mystery, I should be vastly obliged.'

"After a few minutes, during which we made acquaintance, we went to dine at the first *restaurateur's* whose shop caught our eye. At dessert a bottle of champagne completely refreshed and brightened up the memories of this odd old soldier. He told me his story, and I saw that he was right when he exclaimed, 'Well known.'"

When she got home, she teased me to that extent, was so charming, and made so many promises, that I consented to communicate to her the confidences of the old soldier. Next day she received the following episode of an epic which one might call "The French in Egypt."

During the expedition in Upper Egypt under General Desaix, a Provençal soldier fell into the hands of the Maugrabins, and was taken by these Arabs into the deserts beyond the falls of the Nile.

In order to place a sufficient distance between themselves and the French army, the Maugrabins made forced marches, and only halted when night was upon them. They camped round a well overshadowed by palm trees under which they had previously concealed a store of provisions. Not surmising that the notion of flight would occur to their prisoner, they contented themselves with binding his hands, and after eating a few dates, and giving provender to their horses, went to sleep.

When the brave Provençal saw that his enemies were no longer watching him, he made use of his teeth to steal a scimiter, fixed the blade between his knees, and cut the cords which prevented him using his hands; in a moment he was free. He at once seized a rifle and a dagger, then taking

the precaution to provide himself with a sack of dried dates, oats, and powder and shot, and to fasten a scimiter to his waist, he leaped on to a horse, and spurred on vigorously in the direction where he thought to find the French army. So impatient was he to see a bivouac again that he pressed on the already tired courser at such speed, that its flanks were lacerated with his spurs, and at last the poor animal died, leaving the Frenchman alone in the desert. After walking some time in the sand with all the courage of an escaped convict, the soldier was obliged to stop, as the day had already ended. In spite of the beauty of an Oriental sky at night, he felt he had not strength enough to go on. Fortunately he had been able to find a small hill, on the summit of which a few palm trees shot up into the air; it was their verdure seen from afar which had brought hope and consolation to his heart. His fatigue was so great that he lay down upon a rock of granite, capriciously cut out like a camp-bed; there he fell asleep without taking any precaution to defend himself while he slept. He had made the sacrifice of his life. His last thought was one of regret. He repented having left the Maugrabins, whose nomadic life seemed to smile upon him now that he was far from them and without help. He was awakened by the sun, whose pitiless rays fell with all their force on the granite and produced an intolerable heat—for he had had the stupidity to place himself inversely to the shadow thrown by the verdant majestic heads of the palm trees. He looked at the solitary trees and shuddered—they reminded him of the graceful shafts crowned with foliage which characterize the Saracen columns in the cathedral of Arles.

But when, after counting the palm tree, he cast his eyes around him, the most horrible despair was infused into his soul. Before him stretched an ocean without limit. The dark sand of the desert spread further than eye could reach in every direction, and glittered like steel struck with bright light. It might have been a sea of looking-glass, or lakes melted together in a mirror. A fiery vapor carried

up in surging waves made a perpetual whirlwind over the quivering land. The sky was lit with an Oriental splendor of insupportable purity, leaving naught for the imagination to desire. Heaven and earth were on fire.

The silence was awful in its wild and terrible majesty. Infinity, immensity, closed in upon the soul from every side. Not a cloud in the sky, not a breath in the air, not a flaw on the bosom of the sand, ever moving in diminutive waves; the horizon ended as at sea on a clear day, with one line of light, definite as the cut of a sword.

The Provençal threw his arms round the trunk of one of the palm trees, as though it were the body of a friend, and then, in the shelter of the thin, straight shadow that the palm cast upon the granite, he wept. Then sitting down he remained as he was, contemplating with profound sadness the implacable scene, which was all he had to look upon. He cried aloud, to measure the solitude. His voice, lost in the hollows of the hill, sounded faintly, and aroused no echo—the echo was in his own heart. The Provençal was twenty-two years old:—he loaded his carbine.

"There'll be time enough," he said to himself, laying on the ground the weapon which alone could bring him deliverance.

Viewing alternately the dark expanse of the desert and the blue expanse of the sky, the soldier dreamed of France—he smelled with delight the gutters of Paris—he remembered the towns through which he had passed, the faces of his comrades, the most minute details of his life. His Southern fancy soon showed him the stones of his beloved Provence, in the play of the heat which undulated above the wide expanse of the desert. Realizing the danger of this cruel mirage, he went down the opposite side of the hill to that by which he had come up the day before. The remains of a rug showed that this place of refuge had at one time been inhabited; at a short distance he saw some palm trees full of dates. Then the instinct which binds us to life awoke again in his heart. He hoped to live long enough to await the passing of some Maugrabins, or perhaps he might hear

the sound of cannon; for at this time Bonaparte was traversing Egypt.

This thought gave him new life. The palm tree seemed to bend with the weight of the ripe fruit. He shook some of it down. When he tasted this unhoped-for manna, he felt sure that the palms had been cultivated by a former inhabitant—the savory, fresh meat of the dates were proof of the care of his predecessor. He passed suddenly from dark despair to an almost insane joy. He went up again to the top of the hill, and spent the rest of the day in cutting down one of the sterile palm trees, which the night before had served him for shelter. A vague memory made him think of the animals of the desert; and in case they might come to drink at the spring, visible from the base of the rocks but lost further down, he resolved to guard himself from their visits by placing a barrier at the entrance of his hermitage.

In spite of his diligence, and the strength which the fear of being devoured asleep gave him, he was unable to cut the palm in pieces, though he succeeded in cutting it down. At eventide the king of the desert fell; the sound of its fall resounded far and wide, like a sigh in the solitude; the soldier shuddered as though he had heard some voice predicting woe.

But like an heir who does not long bewail a deceased relative, he tore off from this beautiful tree the tall broad green leaves which are its poetic adornment, and used them to mend the mat on which he was to sleep.

Fatigued by the heat and his work, he fell asleep under the red curtains of his wet cave.

In the middle of the night his sleep was troubled by an extraordinary noise; he sat up, and the deep silence around allowed him to distinguish the alternative accents of a respiration whose savage energy could not belong to a human creature.

A profound terror, increased still further by the darkness, the silence, and his waking images, froze his heart within

him. He almost felt his hair stand on end, when by straining his eyes to their utmost he perceived through the shadow two faint yellow lights. At first he attributed these lights to the reflection of his own pupils, but soon the vivid brilliance of the night aided him gradually to distinguish the objects around him in the cave, and he beheld a huge animal lying but two steps from him. Was it a lion, a tiger, or a crocodile?

The Provençal was not sufficiently educated to know under what species his enemy ought to be classed; but his fright was all the greater, as his ignorance led him to imagine all terrors at once; he endured a cruel torture, noting every variation of the breathing close to him without daring to make the slightest movement. An odor, pungent like that of a fox, but more penetrating, more profound,—so to speak,—filled the cave, and when the Provençal became sensible of this, his terror reached its height, for he could no longer doubt the proximity of a terrible companion, whose royal dwelling served him for a shelter.

Presently the reflection of the moon descending on the horizon lit up the den, rendering gradually visible and resplendent the spotted skin of a panther.

This lion of Egypt slept, curled up like a big dog, the peaceful possessor of a sumptuous niche at the gate of an *hôtel;* its eyes opened for a moment and closed again; its face was turned towards the man. A thousand confused thoughts passed through the Frenchman's mind; first he thought of killing it with a bullet from his gun, but he saw there was not enough distance between them for him to take proper aim—the shot would miss the mark. And if it were to wake!—the thought made his limbs rigid. He listened to his own heart beating in the midst of the silence, and cursed the too violent pulsations which the flow of blood brought on, fearing to disturb that sleep which allowed him time to think of some means of escape.

Twice he placed his hand on his scimiter, intending to cut off the head of his enemy; but the difficulty of cutting

the stiff short hair compelled him to abandon this daring project. To miss would be to die for *certain,* he thought; he preferred the chances of fair fight, and made up his mind to wait till morning; the morning did not leave him long to wait.

He could now examine the panther at ease; its muzzle was smeared with blood.

"She's had a good dinner," he thought, without troubling himself as to whether her feast might have been on human flesh. "She won't be hungry when she gets up."

It was a female. The fur on her belly and flanks was glistening white; many small marks like velvet formed beautiful bracelets round her feet; her sinuous tail was also white, ending with black rings; the overpart of her dress, yellow like burnished gold, very lissome and soft, had the characteristic blotches in the form of rosettes, which distinguish the panther from every other feline species.

This tranquil and formidable hostess snored in an attitude as graceful as that of a cat lying on a cushion. Her blood-stained paws, nervous and well armed, were stretched out before her face, which rested upon them, and from which radiated her straight slender whiskers, like threads of silver.

If she had been like that in a cage, the Provençal would doubtless have admired the grace of the animal, and the vigorous contrasts of vivid color which gave her robe an imperial splendor; but just then his sight was troubled by her sinister appearance.

The presence of the panther, even asleep, could not fail to produce the effect which the magnetic eyes of the serpent are said to have on the nightingale.

For a moment the courage of the soldier began to fail before this danger, though no doubt it would have risen at the mouth of a cannon charged with shell. Nevertheless, a bold thought brought daylight to his soul and sealed up the source of the cold sweat which sprang forth on his brow. Like men driven to bay, who defy death and offer their body to the smiter, so he, seeing in this merely a tragic episode, resolved to play his part with honor to the last.

"The day before yesterday the Arabs would have killed me, perhaps," he said; so considering himself as good as dead already, he waited bravely, with excited curiosity, the awakening of his enemy.

When the sun appeared, the panther suddenly opened her eyes; then she put out her paws with energy, as if to stretch them and get rid of cramp. At last she yawned, showing the formidable apparatus of her teeth and pointed tongue, rough as a file.

"A regular *petite maîtresse,*" thought the Frenchman, seeing her roll herself about so softly and coquettishly. She licked off the blood which stained her paws and muzzle, and scratched her head with reiterated gestures full of prettiness. "All right, make a little toilet," the Frenchman said to himself, beginning to recover his gaiety with his courage; "we'll say good-morning to each other presently;" and he seized the small, short dagger which he had taken from the Maugrabins.

At this moment the panther turned her head towards the man and looked at him fixedly without moving. The rigidity of her metallic eyes and their insupportable lustre made him shudder, especially when the animal walked towards him. But he looked at her caressingly, staring into her eyes in order to magnetize her, and let her come quite close to him; then with a movement both gentle and amorous, as though he were caressing the most beautiful of women, he passed his hand over her whole body, from the head to the tail, scratching the flexible vertebræ which divided the panther's yellow back. The animal waved her tail voluptuously, and her eyes grew gentle; and when for the third time the Frenchman accomplished this interesting flattery, she gave forth one of those purrings by which cats express their pleasure; but this murmur issued from a throat so powerful and so deep, that it resounded through the cave like the vast vibrations of an organ in a church. The man, understanding the importance of his caresses, redoubled them in such a way as to surprise and stupefy his imperious courtesan. When he felt sure of having extinguished the ferocity of his capricious companion, whose hunger had so fortunately been

satisfied the day before, he got up to go out of the cave; the panther let him go out, but when he had reached the summit of the hill she sprang with the lightness of a sparrow hopping from twig to twig, and rubbed herself against his legs, putting up her back after the manner of all the race of cats. Then regarding her guest with eyes whose glare had softened a little, she gave vent to that wild cry which naturalists compare to the grating of a saw.

"She is exacting," said the Frenchman, smiling.

He was bold enough to play with her ears; he caressed her belly and scratched her head as hard as he could. When he saw he was successful he tickled her skull with the point of his dagger, watching for the moment to kill her, but the hardness of her bones made him tremble for his success.

The sultana of the desert showed herself gracious to her slave; she lifted her head, stretched out her neck, and manifested her delight by the tranquillity of her attitude. It suddenly occurred to the soldier that to kill this savage princess with one blow he must poniard her in the throat.

He raised the blade, when the panther, satisfied, no doubt, laid herself gracefully at his feet, and cast up at him glances in which, in spite of their natural fierceness, was mingled confusedly a kind of good-will. The poor Provençal ate his dates, leaning against one of the palm trees, and casting his eyes alternately on the desert in quest of some liberator and on his terrible companion to watch her uncertain clemency.

The panther looked at the place where the date stones fell, and every time that he threw one down her eyes expressed an incredible mistrust.

She examined the man with an almost commercial prudence. However, this examination was favorable to him, for when he had finished his meagre meal she licked his boots with her powerful rough tongue, brushing off with marvelous skill the dust gathered in the creases.

"Ah, but when she's really hungry!" thought the Frenchman. In spite of the shudder this thought caused him, the

soldier began to measure curiously the proportions of the panther, certainly one of the most splendid specimens of its race. She was three feet high and four feet long without counting her tail; this powerful weapon, rounded like a cudgel, was nearly three feet long. The head, large as that of a lioness, was distinguished by a rare expression of refinement. The cold cruelty of a tiger was dominant, it was true, but there was also a vague resemblance to the face of a sensual woman. Indeed, the face of this solitary queen had something of the gaiety of a drunken Nero: she had satiated herself with blood, and she wanted to play.

The soldier tried if he might walk up and down, and the panther left him free, contenting herself with following him with her eyes, less like a faithful dog than a big Angora cat, observing everything, and every movement of her master.

When he looked round, he saw, by the spring, the remains of his horse; the panther had dragged the carcase all that way; about two-thirds of it had been devoured already. The sight reassured him.

It was easy to explain the panther's absence, and the respect she had had for him while he slept. The first piece of good luck emboldened him to tempt the future, and he conceived the wild hope of continuing on good terms with the panther during the entire day, neglecting no means of taming her and remaining in her good graces.

He returned to her, and had the unspeakable joy of seeing her wag her tail with an almost imperceptible movement at his approach. He sat down, then, without fear, by her side, and they began to play together; he took her paws and muzzle, pulled her ears, rolled her over on her back, stroked her warm, delicate flanks. She let him do whatever he liked, and when he began to stroke the hair on her feet she drew her claws in carefully.

The man, keeping the dagger in one hand, thought to plunge it into the belly of the too confiding panther, but he was afraid that he would be immediately strangled in her last convulsive struggle; besides, he felt in his heart a sort of

remorse which bade him respect a creature that had done him no harm. He seemed to have found a friend, in a boundless desert; half unconsciously he thought of his first sweetheart, whom he had nicknamed "Mignonne" by way of contrast, because she was so atrociously jealous that all the time of their love he was in fear of the knife with which she had always threatened him.

This memory of his early days suggested to him the idea of making the young panther answer to this name, now that he began to admire with less terror her swiftness, suppleness, and softness. Towards the end of the day he had familiarized himself with his perilous position; he now almost liked the painfulness of it. At last his companion had got into the habit of looking up at him whenever he cried in a falsetto voice, "Mignonne."

At the setting of the sun Mignonne gave, several times running, a profound melancholy cry. "She's been well brought up," said the light-hearted soldier; "she says her prayers." But this mental joke only occurred to him when he noticed what a pacific attitude his companion remained in. "Come, *ma petite blonde,* I'll let you go to bed first," he said to her, counting on the activity of his own legs to run away as quickly as possible, directly she was asleep, and seek another shelter for the night.

The soldier awaited with impatience the hour of his flight, and when it had arrived he walked vigorously in the direction of the Nile; but hardly had he made a quarter of a league in the sand when he heard the panther bounding after him, crying with that saw-like cry, more dreadful even than the sound of her leaping.

"Ah!" he said, "then she's taken a fancy to me; she has never met any one before, and it is really quite flattering to have her first love." That instant the man fell into one of those movable quicksands so terrible to travelers and from which it is impossible to save oneself. Feeling himself caught he gave a shriek of alarm; the panther seized him with her teeth by the collar, and, springing vigorously backwards, drew him as if by magic out of the whirling sand.

"Ah, Mignonne!" cried the soldier, caressing her enthusiastically, "we're bound together for life and death—but no jokes, mind!" and he retraced his steps.

From that time the desert seemed inhabited. It contained a being to whom the man could talk, and whose ferocity was rendered gentle by him, though he could not explain to himself the reason for their strange friendship. Great as was the soldier's desire to stay up on guard, he slept.

On awakening he could not find Mignonne; he mounted the hill, and in the distance saw her springing towards him after the habit of these animals, who cannot run on account of the extreme flexibility of the vertebral column. Mignonne arrived, her jaws covered with blood; she received the wonted caress of her companion, showing with much purring how happy it made her. Her eyes, full of languor, turned still more gently than the day before towards the Provençal, who talked to her as one would to a tame animal.

"Ah! mademoiselle, you are a nice girl, aren't you? Just look at that! so we like to be made much of, don't we? Aren't you ashamed of yourself? So you have been eating some Arab or other, have you? That doesn't matter. They're animals just the same as you are; but don't you take to eating Frenchmen, or I shan't like you any longer."

She played like a dog with its master, letting herself be rolled over, knocked about, and stroked, alternately; sometimes she herself would provoke the soldier, putting up her paw with a soliciting gesture.

Some days passed in this manner. This companionship permitted the Provençal to appreciate the sublime beauty of the desert; now that he had a living thing to think about, alternations of fear and quiet, and plenty to eat, his mind became filled with contrasts and his life began to be diversified.

Solitude revealed to him all her secrets, and enveloped him in her delights. He discovered in the rising and setting of the sun sights unknown to the world. He knew what it was to tremble when he heard over his head the hiss of a bird's

wings, so rarely did they pass, or when he saw the clouds, changing and many colored travelers, melt one into another. He studied in the night-time the effect of the moon upon the ocean of sand, where the simoom made waves swift of movement and rapid in their change. He lived the life of the Eastern day, marveling at its wonderful pomp; then, after having reveled in the sight of a hurricane over the plain where the whirling sands made red, dry mists and death-bearing clouds, he would welcome the night with joy, for then fell the healthful freshness of the stars, and he listened to imaginary music in the skies. Then solitude taught him to unroll the treasures of dreams. He passed whole hours in remembering mere nothings, and comparing his present life with his past.

At last he grew passionately fond of the panther; for some sort of affection was a necessity.

Whether it was that his will powerfully projected had modified the character of his companion, or whether, because she found abundant food in her predatory excursions in the deserts, she respected the man's life, he began to fear for it no longer, seeing her so well tamed.

He devoted the greater part of his time to sleep, but he was obliged to watch like a spider in its web that the moment of his deliverance might not escape him, if any one should pass the line marked by the horizon. He had sacrificed his shirt to make a flag with, which he hung at the top of a palm tree, whose foliage he had torn off. Taught by necessity, he found the means of keeping it spread out, by fastening it with little sticks; for the wind might not be blowing at the moment when the passing traveler was looking through the desert.

It was during the long hours, when he had abandoned hope, that he amused himself with the panther. He had come to learn the different inflections of her voice, the expressions of her eyes; he had studied the capricious patterns of all the rosettes which marked the gold of her robe. Mignonne was not angry even when he took hold of the tuft at the end of

her tail to count the rings, those graceful ornaments which glittered in the sun like jewelry. It gave him pleasure to contemplate the supple, fine outlines of her form, the whiteness of her belly, the graceful pose of her head. But it was especially when she was playing that he felt most pleasure in looking at her; the agility and youthful lightness of her movements were a continual surprise to him; he wondered at the supple way which she jumped and climbed, washed herself and arranged her fur, crouched down and prepared to spring. However rapid her spring might be, however slippery the stone she was on, she would always stop short at the word "Mignonne."

One day, in a bright mid-day sun, an enormous bird coursed through the air. The man left his panther to look at his new guest; but after waiting a moment the deserted sultana growled deeply.

"My goodness! I do believe she's jealous," he cried, seeing her eyes become hard again; "the soul of Virginie has passed into her body, that's certain."

The eagle disappeared into the air, whilst the soldier admired the curved contour of the panther.

But there was such youth and grace in her form! she was beautiful as a woman! the blond fur of her robe mingled well with the delicate tints of faint white which marked her flanks.

The profuse light cast down by the sun made this living gold, these russet markings, to burn in a way to give them an indefinable attraction.

The man and the panther looked at one another with a look full of meaning; the coquette quivered when she felt her friend stroke her head; her eyes flashed like lightning—then she shut them tightly.

"She has a soul," he said, looking at the stillness of this queen of the sands, golden like them, white like them, solitary and burning like them.

* * * * * *

"Well," she said, "I have read your plea in favor of beasts; but how did two so well adapted to understand each other end?"

"Ah, well! you see, they ended as all great passions do end—by a misunderstanding. From some reason *one* suspects the other of treason; they don't come to an explanation through pride, and quarrel and part from sheer obstinacy."

"Yet sometimes at the best moments a single word or a look is enough—but anyhow go on with your story."

"It's horribly difficult, but you will understand, after what the old villain told me over his champagne. He said—'I don't know if I hurt her, but she turned round, as if enraged, and with her sharp teeth caught hold of my leg—gently, I dare say; but I, thinking she would devour me, plunged my dagger into her throat. She rolled over, giving a cry that froze my heart; and I saw her dying, still looking at me without anger. I would have given all the world—my cross even, which I had not got then—to have brought her to life again. It was as though I had murdered a real person; and the soldiers who had seen my flag, and were come to my assistance, found me in tears.

"'Well, sir,' he said, after a moment of silence, 'since then I have been in war in Germany, in Spain, in Russia, in France; I've certainly carried my carcase about a good deal, but never have I seen anything like the desert. Ah! yes, it is very beautiful!'

"'What did you feel there?' I asked him.

"'Oh! that can't be described, young man! Besides, I am not always regretting my palm trees and my panther. I should have to be very melancholy for that. In the desert, you see, there is anything, and nothing.'

"'Yes, but explain——'

"'Well,' he said, with an impatient gesture, 'it is God without mankind.'"

THE GONDREVILLE MYSTERY

AND

THE MUSE OF THE DEPARTMENT

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INTRODUCTION

WHILE I was engaged in preparing these Introductions, I saw in an English newspaper, of some literary as well as other repute, remarks on Balzac as compared with some writers of crime and detective stories in the present day. According to a habit which alternates with the other habit of reverencing predecessors exaggeratedly, the reviewer spoke with the utmost contempt of Balzac's work, and opined that contemporary English practitioners of the art had made progress in it, justifying something like John P. Robinson's contempt for the persons "down in Judee." It is fair to say that what these remarks were immediately based upon was not *Une Ténébreuse Affaire,* but *Ferragus,* which is a much cruder specimen of the author's power. But, still, I am inclined to think that this generous, and probably young, partisan of the present was a little hard on the poor old past. In the first place, it is something to be the original and not the copy; and it is certain as anything in history that Balzac begat Poe, and that Poe begat all our English crime-novelists. To raise the flower when the seed can be bought at any shop round the corner is, as Lord Tennyson once remarked, not an extraordinarily difficult affair; to which it may be added that to raise ever bigger and brighter-colored flowers by ingenious crossing and some pains is also not beyond the reach of intolerably limited powers. It is very different to make the first cross, to fish the murex up, if I may shift the comparison and the quotation.

Perhaps, too, it is a little hasty to make so sure that things have actually improved. I speak on this point with diffidence, having no very special love for any of these detective stories

as such. But I think you may be too ingenious and recondite in a detective story as well as elsewhere, and that the picture is not always the best where the painter has taken the most elaborate pains.

However this may be, he must, I think, be a difficult person to please who is not pleased with *Une Ténébreuse Affaire,* the only blot on which seems to me to be the early conduct of Michu, which was rather calculated to attract than to avert suspicion. Otherwise the games and counter-games in which Corentin figures justify that personage's reputation much better than *Les Chouans* (where his part is practically played for him by others), and rank with the most ingenious exercises of the kind. In this story, moreover, while he had attained greater technical skill than in *Les Chouans,* Balzac still retained enough of his old romantic enthusiasm to insert a strong element of nobility and pathos into the story, by means of the devotion of Michu and the heroism of Laurence. His admixture of reasons of state may be regarded with different feelings by different persons, and Marsay's key to the whole business may or may not seem superfluous. But it must be remembered that in Balzac's time the opinion which Miss Martha Buskbody so uncompromisingly expressed at the end of *Old Mortality*—the opinion that the author ought to account for everything and mention, at least summarily, the ultimate fate of everybody—was still very largely held by readers, and not discountenanced by critics. Moreover, the practice gave Balzac an opportunity of keying the story on to that fantastic society of wits, statesmen, dandies, and great ladies which he so fondly cherished, and which had such an influence on his time, that, as Sainte-Beuve, no friendly witness, tells us, a Venetian coterie actually adopted it as a model, and played out the parts of the Marsays and the Maufrigneuses with all gravity in real life.

We may, however, leave the wiles of Corentin and Peyrade,

the evidence of the crusts and the bottle-wax, the extremely ingenious confusion between the two imprisonments and the rest of the cat-and-mouse business, to those who appreciate it, with nothing more than a repetition of the remark that Balzac, if not the absolute inventor (for nobody ever is the absolute inventor of anything), was the first really great novelist to devote himself to matter of this kind. There will always be a sufficiency of good wits to hold that he has not been surpassed, to say no more, by any other novelist, great or small, since, especially in the little fishing or feeling passage-of-arms between Corentin and the curé. And we may leave to other tastes the romantic interest of the actual story.

Une Ténébreuse Affaire appeared with chapter divisions in the newspaper *Le Commerce* during January and February 1841, and was published by Souverain as a book in 1843. It was placed in the *Comédie* three years later.

Although *La Muse du Département* is an important work, it cannot be spoken of in quite unhesitating terms. It contains, indeed, in the personage of Lousteau, one of the very most elaborate of Balzac's portraits of a particular type of men of letters. The original is said to have been Jules Janin, who is somewhat disadvantageously contrasted here and elsewhere with Claude Vignon, said on the same rather vague authority to be Gustave Planche. Both Janin and Planche are now too much forgotten, but in both more or less (and in Lousteau very much "more") Balzac cannot be said to have dealt mildly with his *bête noire*, the critical temperament. Lousteau, indeed, though not precisely a scoundrel, is both a rascal and a cad. Even Balzac seems a little shocked at his *lettre de faire part* in reference to his mistress' child; and it is seldom possible to discern in any of his proceedings the

most remote approximation to the conduct of a gentleman. But then, as we have seen, and shall see, Balzac's standard for the conduct of his actual gentlemen was by no means fantastically exquisite or discouragingly high, and in the case of his Bohemians it was accommodating to the utmost degree. He seems to despise Lousteau, but rather for his insouciance and neglect of his opportunities of making himself a position than for anything else.

I have often felt disposed to ask those who would assert Balzac's absolute infallibility as a gynæcologist to give me a reasoned criticism of the heroine of this novel. I do not entirely "figure to myself" Dinah de la Baudraye. It is perfectly possible that she should have loved a "sweep" like Lousteau; there is certainly nothing extremely unusual in a woman loving worse sweeps even than he. But would she have done it, and having done it, have also done what she did afterwards? These questions may be answered differently; I do not answer them in the negative myself, but I cannot give them an affirmative answer with the conviction which I should like to show.

Among the minor characters, the *substitut* de Clagny has a touch of nobility which contrasts happily enough with Lousteau's unworthiness. Bianchon is as good as usual: Balzac always gives Bianchon a favorable part. Madame Piédefer is one of the numerous instances in which the unfortunate class of mothers-in-law atones for what are supposed to be its crimes against the human race; and old La Baudraye, not so hopelessly repulsive in a French as he would be in an English novel, is a shrewd old rascal enough.

But I cannot think the scene of the Parisians *blaguing* the Sancerrois a very happy one. That it is in exceedingly bad taste might not matter so very much; Balzac would reply, and justly, that he had not intended to represent it as anything else. That the fun is not very funny may be a matter of defi-

nition and appreciation. But what scarcely admits of denial or discussion is that it is tyrannously too long. The citations of *Olympia* are pushed beyond measure, beyond what is comic, almost beyond the license of farce; and the comments, which remind one rather of the heavy jesting on critics in *Un Prince de la Bohème* and the short-lived *Revue Parisienne,* are labored to the last degree. The part of Nathan, too, is difficult to appreciate exactly, and altogether the book does not seem to me a *réussite.*

La Muse du Département has a rather more complicated record than its companion piece in *Les Parisiens en Province, L'Illustre Gaudissart.* It appeared at first, not quite complete and under the title of *Dinah Piédefer,* in *Le Messager* during March and April 1843, and was almost immediately published as a book, with works of other writers, under the general title of *Les Mystères de Province,* and accompanied by some other work of its own author's. It had four parts and fifty-two chapters in *Le Messager,* an arrangement which was but slightly altered in the volume form. M. de Lovenjoul gives some curious indications of mosaic work in it, and some fragments which do not now appear in the text.

G. S.

THE GONDREVILLE MYSTERY

To Monsieur de Margone, from his grateful guest at Château de Saché, de Balzac.

I.

THE TRIALS OF THE POLICE

THE autumn of the year 1803 was one of the finest during the Empire Period, as we call the earliest years of the nineteenth century. Rain had fallen in October; the fields were refreshed; and the green leaves were still on the trees in mid-November. Wherefore people were beginning to believe in a covenant between heaven and Bonaparte, then recently declared Consul for life. This belief was one among many to which he owed his magical influence; and (strange coincidence!) when the sun failed him in 1812, his prosperity came to an end.

Towards four o'clock in the afternoon on the fifteenth of November 1803 the sunlight fell like a crimson dust over the crests of two double rows of ancient elms in a long and lordly avenue—and lighted up the sand and the bents of grass about one of those vast circular spaces which you may see near country seats; for land in former times was worth so little that it could be sacrificed to ornament. The air was so pure, the evening so mild, that the family from the lodge were sitting out of doors as if it were summer-time. A man in a green canvas shooting-coat with green buttons, breeches of the same material, linen gaiters reaching to the knees, and thin-soled walking-shoes, was busy cleaning a rifle with that punctilious care which a skilled sportsman bestows on his weapon in leisure moments. This man, however, had neither

pouch nor game-bag, nor any of a sportsman's accoutrements, and an ill-disguised dread seemed to weigh upon the minds of the two women who sat watching him. Indeed, if any one else had been looking on at this scene from behind one of the bushes, he must have shuddered with the man's wife and the old mother-in-law. Clearly, no sportsman takes such minute pains for a day's shooting; nor, in the department of the Aube, does he carry a heavy rifle.

"Are you going buck-shooting, Michu?" asked his pretty young wife, forcing a smile.

Michu did not answer her at once. He turned his attention to the dog that was lying out in the sunshine with his muzzle on his outstretched paws, in the charming attitude peculiar to sporting dogs. This animal had raised his head and was snuffing the wind, first in the direction of the avenue that stretched away for more than half a mile, and then again towards a cross-road which came out to the left of the great circle.

"No," said Michu, at length. "It is a monster that I do not mean to miss; it is a lynx."

The dog, a very handsome brown and white spaniel, began to growl.

"Good," muttered Michu. "Spies! The country swarms with them."

Madame Michu, a beautiful fair-haired, blue-eyed woman, with a grave, thoughtful face and a form moulded like an antique statue, raised her eyes sorrowfully to the sky. Some dark and bitter trouble seemed to weigh upon her. The man's looks to some extent justified the woman's fears. The laws of physiognomy are exact not merely in their application to character, but also in forecasting the future. Some faces are prophetic. If it were possible to obtain faithful portraits of all who die upon the scaffold (and these statistics from the life are of importance to society), the science of Gall and Lavater would prove incontestably that there were strange tokens on all of those faces, even among the guiltless. Yes, Fate sets a mark on the countenances of those

that are destined to die a violent death; and that seal was visible for experienced eyes on the expressive face of the man with the rifle.

Michu was short and stout; and jerky and nimble in his movements as a monkey. He was a man of quiet temper, but his countenance of the squat Kalmuck type, his white skin streaked with tiny distended blood vessels, and red crisp hair, gave him a sinister look. His eyes were like a tiger's, tawny and clear; you might gaze down into their uttermost depths, they neither kindled nor moved. Steady, bright, unblenching, they grew intolerable at last. The continual contrast between the man's quick alertness and the unchanging eyes added to the glacial impression which Michu made upon you at first sight. Here was a man prompt to act, a man whose whole power of action was controlled by one fixed idea; even as in animals the creature's life is entirely subordinated to unreflecting instinct.

Since 1793 Michu had worn a fan-shaped beard, a peculiarity which would have lent a formidable look to his face even if he had not been the president of a Jacobin club during the Terror. The flat-nosed Socratic visage was crowned by a noble forehead, so curved, however, that it seemed to overhang the face beneath it; the well-set ears seemed ready to move like the ears of a wild animal and always on the alert. The mouth was always open (a habit common enough among countrymen), so that you could catch a glimpse of strong teeth, white as almonds, but irregular. Thick glossy whiskers framed the pale face with its purpled patches; while the tawny red of the hair, cropped close in front, but left to grow at the sides and back of the head, did their part to perfection in bringing out all the strangeness, all the signs of fate, in the man's appearance. His short thick neck seemed to tempt the hatchet of the law.

At this moment the slanting shafts of sunlight fell full upon the faces of the three people at whom the dog looked up in turn; and the theatre in which the scene was enacted was, moreover, a most noble one.

The circular space lay at the furthest extremity of the park of Gondreville, one of the finest estates in France and unquestionably the finest in the department of the Aube, with its château built from Mansard's designs, its magnificent avenues of elm trees, its fifteen hundred acres of park enclosed with walls, its nine large farms, its forest, mills, and meadows. Before the Revolution this almost princely domain belonged to the Simeuse family. Ximeuse is a fief in Lorraine. The name is pronounced *Simeuse,* and in the end the spelling followed the pronunciation.

The great fortune of the Simeuses, a noble family attached to the House of Burgundy, dated back to the times when the Guises overshadowed the Valois. Afterwards, neither Richelieu nor Louis XIV. forgot their devotion to the factious House of Lorraine, and the Simeuses were out of favor at court. So the marquis of that day—an old Burgundian, an old Guisard, Leaguer, and Frondeur, heir to the four great grudges which the noblesse bare the crown—came to live at Cinq-Cygne, a courtier driven from the court of the Louvre. He had married the widow of the Comte de Cinq-Cygne, the younger branch of the great House of Chargebœuf, one of the most illustrious families of Champagne; though the Cinq-Cygnes were wealthier than the elder line and at least as famous.

And so it came to pass that the Marquis de Simeuse, one of the richest nobles of the age, built Gondreville instead of ruining himself at court, and rounded out the estate with broad lands simply to add to his great game preserves. It was he who built the Hôtel de Simeuse, near the Hôtel de Cinq-Cygne at Troyes (the two old mansions and the bishop's palace were the only stone buildings in the city for a long while), and it was he, likewise, who sold Ximeuse to the Duke of Lorraine.

His son wasted his father's savings and even broke into his fine fortune during the reign of Louis XV., but he entered the navy, became a commodore and a vice-admiral, and redeemed his youthful follies by splendid services to the state.

The Admiral's eldest son, the Marquis de Simeuse, died on the scaffold at Troyes during the Revolution, leaving twin sons who at that moment were following the fortunes of the House of Condé as *émigrés*.

The great circular space was the place where the hunt met in the time of the Great Marquis (for so the builder of Gondreville was called in the family), and a hunting lodge had been built within the park walls in the time of Louis XIV. It was here in the Cinq-Cygne lodge, as it was called, that Michu had lived since 1789. The village of Cinq-Cygne lay on the edge of the Forest of Nodesme (a corruption of *Notre Dame*), and the way to the village was through the double avenue of elm trees, the quarter in which Couraut got wind of spies. The lodge had fallen completely into disuse since the time of the Great Marquis, the Admiral knew more of the court or the high seas than of his lands in Champagne, and his son, the late Marquis, had made over the dilapidated house to Michu for a dwelling.

It was a noble brick building with reticulated corner-stones and facings. A handsome but rust-eaten wrought-iron gateway on either side abutted upon a broad deep haha with great trees springing up on its sides, and parapets bristling with iron scrollwork, which confronted intruders with a formidable array of spikes.

The park walls only began beyond the circumference of the circle. The imposing half-moon without was enclosed by a bank with elm trees growing upon it; the corresponding inner half being outlined by clumps of foreign trees. So the hunting lodge stood exactly in the centre of the space traced out by the two horseshoes.

Michu used the great rooms on the ground floor as stable, cow-shed, and kitchen. Nothing of all the ancient splendor of the place was left save the hall paved with marble, white and black, which you entered from the side of the park, by one of those glass doors with little square panes, which you used to see at Versailles before Louis Philippe turned that palace into a hospital for the departed "glories of France."

Within, the lodge was divided in two by a wooden staircase, old-fashioned and worm-eaten, but not wanting in character. There were five somewhat low rooms on the first floor, and a vast garret up above in the roof, for the venerable edifice was crowned by a four-sided roof, terminating in a ridge with a leaden finial at either end by way of ornament.

Michu stored his fodder in this garret, which was lighted by four bull's-eye windows of the kind affected, and not without reason, by Mansard; for the flat Italian roof and low attic story is an absurdity against which our French climate protests.

The park about the old hunting-lodge was planned out in the English fashion. A lake, or rather a sheet of water that once had been a lake and was now a mere pond, well stocked with fish, manifested its presence by a film of mist that hung above the tree-tops, and, no less, by the croaking of hundreds of frogs and sounds made by noisy amphibious creatures after sunset. The pervading sense of crumbling age and decay, the deep silence in the woods, the avenue stretching away into the distance, the far-off forest, the rust-eaten ironwork, the massive stones clad in velvet moss, —these and a thousand little things combined to lend an idyllic grace to a building which remains to this day.

At the time of the opening of this story, Michu was leaning against the moss-covered parapet. His powder-flask, cap, and handkerchief were lying on the wall beside him, together with a screwdriver, some bits of rag and odd tools required for his suspicious operations. His wife was sitting just outside the lodge, almost under the doorway where the richly-carved armorial bearings of the Simeuse family and their noble motto *Si meurs!* still remained intact; and her mother, dressed like a peasant woman, had put her chair just in front, so that Madame Michu's feet might rest on the rungs and not on the damp ground.

"Is the boy here?" Michu asked of his wife.

"He is roaming somewhere about the pond," said the mother; "he is crazy over frogs and insects."

Michu gave an alarming whistle, and his son came running up at once. Evidently the bailiff at Gondreville was master in his own house, and since 1789, and still more since 1793, he had done pretty much as he liked on the estate. His wife and her mother, a young lad named Gaucher, and Marianne, the servant girl, were all afraid of him, and so was everybody else for a score of miles around. The causes of this feeling of terror should perhaps be given without further delay, for in this way Michu's portrait will be completed by a sketch of his character.

The old Marquis de Simeuse had parted with most of his property in 1790; but events moved too quickly for him; he had not time to put the great Gondreville estate in trustworthy hands. Accused of corresponding with the Duke of Brunswick and the Prince of Coburg, the Marquis de Simeuse and his wife were imprisoned and condemned to death by the Revolutionary Tribunal of Troyes, under the presidency of Madame Michu's father. The great estate was therefore sold by the nation. People noticed at the time, with something like a thrill of horror, that the old Marquis' head gamekeeper, the president of the Arcis Jacobin club, had come to Troyes to be present at the execution. Michu was an orphan, and the son of a simple peasant. The Marquise had loaded him with kindnesses; she had taken him as a child into the château and had given him the head keeper's place. Lofty patriotism regarded Michu as a second Brutus; but no one in the countryside would recognize him after that piece of flagrant ingratitude.

The buyer of the estate was a man from Arcis, one Marion, whose grandfather had been land steward to the Simeuses. This Marion, a barrister before and after the Revolution, was afraid of the keeper, and employed him as bailiff with a salary of three thousand livres and a commission on the sales of timber. Michu was supposed to have some ten thousand francs of his own already, when, with his reputation for patriotism to recommend him, he married the daughter of a tanner at

Troyes. His father-in-law was the apostle of Revolution in the town and the president of the Revolutionary Tribunal. A man of convictions, not unlike Saint-Just in character, he was mixed up afterwards in the Babeuf conspiracy and committed suicide to escape trial. Marthe, his daughter, was the prettiest girl in Troyes, and therefore she had been obliged by her formidable parent to personate the Goddess of Liberty on a Republican high day.

Marion, the proprietor of Gondreville, scarcely came to the place three times in seven years. His grandfather had been the Simeuses' land-steward; and all Arcis believed at the time that Citizen Marion really represented the Marquis' two sons. As for the bailiff of Gondreville, as a devoted patriot and the son-in-law of the president of the Revolutionary Tribunal at Troyes, he was greatly in favor with Malin, one of the representatives of the department of the Aube, and people treated him with a certain respect so long as the Terror lasted. But after the decline of the Mountain and the tanner's suicide, Michu became the scapegoat of his party. All the blame of many violent deeds was thrown upon the dead man and his son-in-law, though in truth the latter had neither art nor part in them. Then the bailiff of Gondreville stood up for himself and assumed a hostile attitude in the face of the crowd that did him this injustice. He showed a bold front in words. But the 18th Brumaire came and went, and Michu relapsed into a profound silence, the philosophy of the strong. He made no more protest against public opinion, he was satisfied to act; this prudence gained him a reputation for sly cunning, for he possessed about a hundred thousand francs in land. Michu's money had been made in perfectly legitimate ways. His salary and commission amounted to six thousand francs per annum, and he had inherited his wife's father's property. But though he had been bailiff of Gondreville for a dozen years, and anybody who chose to do so could calculate the amount of his savings, the old outcry against the Jacobin was raised again when he bought a farm worth fifty thousand francs towards the close

of the Consulate. At Arcis people said that Michu meant to redeem his character by making a lot of money. And, unluckily, just as this affair was dying out of people's memories, a trifling incident set rancorous tongues gossiping in the countryside, and revived the general belief in the ferocity of the bailiff's character.

Coming home one evening from Troyes in the company of several peasants, Michu chanced to drop a paper on the high-road. The tenant of Cinq-Cygne, who knew how to read, was walking behind the rest. He stooped and picked it up. Michu turned, and saw the farmer with the paper in his hands. In a moment he drew his pistol from his belt, cocked the weapon, and threatened to blow the man's brains out if he read a word of the paper. It all happened so suddenly, Michu's behavior was so violent, the tone of his voice so awful, and his eyes glared so fiercely, that the men all felt a cold chill of terror. Naturally Michu made an enemy of the tenant of Cinq-Cygne.

Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, the Simeuses' cousin, had but the one farm for her fortune. She lived at the château of Cinq-Cygne; and her whole life was devoted to the twin cousins, her playmates as a child at Troyes and Gondreville. Her only brother, Julian de Cinq-Cygne, left France earlier than the Simeuses, and had fallen before Mayence; but the house of Cinq-Cygne possessed a sufficiently rare privilege of which more must be said by-and-by, the heiress of the house transmitted the title in default of heirs male. This affair between Michu and the tenant caused a terrific hubbub in the countryside and darkened the gloomy mystery that hung about Michu; nor was this the only circumstance which gained him a formidable name.

A few months went by, and Citizen Marion came to Gondreville. He brought with him Citizen Malin. Political events had turned out so well for Malin and Arcis that the First Consul had given him a seat at the Council of State as a reward for his services on the 18th Brumaire. Marion had sold the estate to Malin (so rumor ran), and politicians

in the little town of Arcis now discovered that Marion had been Malin's stalking-horse all along and not a cover for the MM. Simeuse. The all-powerful Councillor of State was the great man of Arcis. He had sent one of his political allies to the prefecture at Troyes; he had exempted the son of one of the Gondreville tenants, one Beauvisage, from military service; he was everybody's friend. Consequently, there was no one to say a word against the bargain in the whole countryside, where Malin reigned and still reigns supreme.

It was just in the dawn of the Empire. People who read about the French Revolution to-day in history books will never have any idea of the immense distances traveled by public opinion between the events that come so thickly together. The need of peace and quiet after violent commotion was so generally felt that the most serious matters were forgotten in a very short time. Events were ripened continually by new and burning interests and soon became ancient history. So nobody except Michu looked curiously into the past; and the bargain seemed perfectly simple to other eyes. Marion had bought Gondreville for six hundred thousand francs in *assignats,* he sold it for a million in current coin; but Malin paid nothing out of his pocket except the fees for the registration of title. Grévin, an old comrade of Malin's in the days when both were ecclesiastics, naturally favored this piece of jobbery. He had his reward. The Councillor of State made him a notary at Arcis.

When the new owner came to the lodge, brought thither by the tenant of Grouage (the farm that lay to the left of the great avenue, between the park and the forest), Michu's face grew white; he left the house. He went off in search of Marion, whom he found at last alone in one of the broad walks in the park.

"Are you selling Gondreville, sir?"

"Yes, Michu, yes. You will have an influential master. The Councillor is one of the First Consul's friends, and very well acquainted with all the Ministry. He will do well by you."

"Then were you keeping the place for *him* all along?"

"I do not say that," replied Marion. "I did not know how to invest the money at the time, and I thought I should be safe if I put it into the National lands; but I do not care about keeping a place that belonged to the family, when my father was——"

"A servant in their house, their steward!" Michu interrupted fiercely. "But you are not going to sell the place; I want it, and I can pay you for it, myself——"

"*You?*"

"Yes, I. I mean it! eight hundred thousand francs and in good gold——"

"Eight hundred thousand francs! Where did you get them?" asked Marion.

"That is no affair of yours," returned Michu. Then in a milder tone and lowered voice he added, "My wife's father saved a good many livres."

"You are too late, Michu. The thing is done now."

"You can put it off, sir!" exclaimed the bailiff, and catching at his employer's hand he held it in a vise-like grip. "People hate me; I want to be rich and powerful; I must have Gondreville! and I don't care a straw for my life, mind you; so sell the land to me or I will blow your brains out!"

"But anyhow I must have time to back out of it with Malin, and he is not of an accommodating turn——"

"I will give you twenty-four hours. If you say a word about this, I shall think no more of cutting off your head than of slithering a turnip."

Marion and Malin left the château that night. Marion was frightened; he told the Councillor about his interview and advised him to keep an eye on the bailiff. It was too late to go back on the bargain; Marion was obliged to make over the estate to the man who had actually paid for it; and it seemed to him that Michu was not the man to understand or admit such a reason. Moreover, it was understood that this service rendered to Malin was to lay the foundation of a political fortune for Marion and his brother. And so it proved. In 1806

Advocate Marion became president of an Imperial court through Malin's influence, and afterwards, when receivers-general were instituted, Marion's brother was appointed to the department of the Aube. Malin recommended Marion to remove to Paris, and spoke to the Minister of Police, who put a special guard over the threatened man. But Michu was still bailiff of the Gondreville estate, under the ferule of the Arcis notary; Malin did not wish to drive him to extremities, or perhaps he thought that he could the better keep a watch on him.

From this time forth Michu grew more and more thoughtful and taciturn; and people looked upon him as a man capable of ugly deeds. A Councillor of State under the First Consul was as powerful as a Minister. Malin played a great part in Paris. He was one of the commissioners employed upon the Code. He bought one of the finest mansions in the Faubourg Saint Germain after his marriage with the daughter of a rich contractor named Sibuelle, who had fallen into disgrace. After receivers-general were instituted, this worthy was associated with Marion's brother in the department of the Aube. So Malin only once came back to Gondreville; he left Grévin to look after his interests there.

After all, what had he, the sometime representative of the Aube, to fear from an ex-president of the Arcis Jacobin club? Yet, the townspeople not unnaturally shared the peasants' bad opinion of Michu; and Marion, Malin, and Grévin, without committing themselves, took it for granted that he was an extremely dangerous character. Nor did the action of the authorities, who had orders from headquarters to keep the bailiff under police supervision, tend to destroy this opinion. People began to wonder how it was that Michu kept his place, and finally decided that the master was too much afraid of his bailiff to turn him out. After this who can fail to understand the meaning of the deep melancholy of Marthe's expression?

Marthe had been piously brought up from the first by her mother. Both women were good Catholics. The tanner's

opinions and conduct had given them pain. The red color came into Marthe's face whenever she thought of the day when she was dressed as a goddess and paraded about the city of Troyes. Her father forced her to marry Michu; she was too much afraid of her husband to judge him, but his bad reputation grew worse. And yet she felt that he loved her; in the depths of her woman's heart there was a very true and real affection for the terrible revolutionary. She had never seen him do anything that was not right; he never spoke a rough word to her, at any rate; nay, he tried to guess her every wish. He was almost always out of the house, for he thought, poor pariah, that his presence was disagreeable to her. Marthe and Michu, mutually distrustful, might be said to live in an armed neutrality, to use the modern phrase.

For seven years people had pointed the finger at her as the executioner's daughter and the wife of a husband branded as a traitor. Marthe felt it keenly. Beauvisage, the tenant of Bellache, the farm in the plain to the right of the avenue, used to come past the lodge, and often she had heard the man say:

"That is Judas' house!"

Beauvisage was attached to the Simeuses.

The bailiff seemed to have done his best to complete the extraordinary resemblance to the thirteenth apostle, to which, in fact, he owed the horrible nickname given to him all over the countryside. And it was this trouble, and certain vague but ever-present forebodings that made Marthe look grave and thoughtful. Nothing brings more deep dejection than the sense of undeserved and hopeless degradation. A painter surely might have made a great picture of this little group of pariahs, in one of the loveliest spots in that Champagne country, where the landscape is usually so dreary.

"François!" shouted the bailiff to hasten the boy's speed.

François Michu, a child of ten, was free of the park and forest where he levied his little tithe, ate the fruit, went a-hunting, and knew no trouble nor care. He was the one happy creature in a household cut off from the rest of the

world by the forest and the park; and no less cut off from their kind by a feeling of repulsion in which every one shared.

"Just pick up these things," said Michu, pointing to the parapet, "and put this away. Look me in the face! You ought to love your father and mother, eh?"

For answer the child jumped up to kiss his father, but Michu turned to take up the rifle and pushed him away.

"Good! You have blabbed sometimes about things that are done here," he continued, fixing two eyes, formidable as a wildcat's, upon the child. "Now mind this; if you tell tales of the smallest thing that happens here to Gaucher or to the folk at Bellache or Grouage, or even to Marianne that is so fond of us, you will be the death of your father. Don't let this happen again, and I will forgive you for yesterday's prattle."

The little one began to cry.

"Don't cry; but if anybody asks you any questions, say 'I don't know,' as the peasants do. There are people prowling about the country, and I don't like the looks of them. There! You understood, didn't you?" added Michu, turning to the women. "So keep still tongues in your head."

"What are you going to do, dear?"

Michu was carefully measuring a charge of powder and loading his rifle. He laid the weapon down on the parapet and said to Marthe, "Nobody knows that I have this rifle; come, and stand here in front!"

Couraut got up, barking furiously.

"That's a good sharp dog!" exclaimed Michu; "there are spies about, I am certain——"

The presence of a spy can always be felt. Couraut and Michu seemed to have but one and the same life; they lived like an Arab and his horse in the desert. Michu knew the meaning of every sound that Couraut made, as well as the dog could read the expression of his master's face and knew his thoughts by instinct.

"What do you say to that?" Michu exclaimed in a whisper,

as two suspicious-looking persons appeared in a side walk, and came towards them.

"What is going on hereabouts? They are from Paris," said the old mother.

"Aha! That's the way," said Michu. "Just hide my rifle," he added, in his wife's ear. "They are coming towards us."

The two men from Paris, now crossing the graveled space, might have served as types for a painter. The one, and seemingly the inferior, wore high boots with tops turned down rather lower than usual to afford a view of a pair of roguish calves covered with striped silk stockings of dubious cleanliness. His ribbed, apricot-colored breeches fastened with metal buttons were a trifle too ample, and comfortably slack about his person, and it was evident from the position of the worn creases that he was a man of sedentary habits. A quilted waistcoat, loaded with embroidery and fastened by one button only across the chest, contributed to a general air of slovenliness that was further increased by the black corkscrew curls which hid his forehead and hung about his cheeks. A blue and white cameo pin adorned his shirt front, and a double line of steel watch-chain hung below his waist. His cinnamon-brown coat would have caught the eye of a caricaturist at once, for the long tail behind exactly resembled the codfish from which the garment took its name. The codfish-tail coat was in fashion for ten years. Napoleon's empire lasted not much longer.

A limp and very voluminous cravat enabled this individual to muffle himself to the nose in its voluminous folds. A pimpled countenance, a long, swollen, brick-red nose, high-colored cheek bones, a toothless but appalling, sensual mouth, a low forehead, and ears adorned with thick gold rings, were seemingly grotesque features made terrible by two little slits of eyes, set like a pig's eyes in the man's head; there was obdurate greed in them, and a jovial, and, so to speak, hilarious cruelty. Those keen-sighted, burrowing eyes of freezing and frozen blue, might have been taken as a model for that formidable Eye which the police took for their emblem during

the Revolution. This worthy wore black silk gloves and carried a little switch. He was unmistakably an official personage; there was that in his bearing and in his manner of taking snuff and thrusting it into his nostrils, which told of the self-importance of an understrapper of the Government—the man who magnifies his office when clothed with a little brief authority from high quarters.

His companion's costume was in the same taste, but it was elegant and elegantly worn, and care was expended upon all its details. He wore tight-fitting breeches and boots *à la Suwarrow* which creaked as he walked. His shirt collar reached the tips of his ears, valuable trinkets adorned his person, and he wore a spencer over his coat, an aristocratic fashion adopted by the Clichyens and gilded youth of the Revolution and destined to survive both gilded youth and Clichyens. Fashions in dress outlived political parties in those days, a sure sign of unsettlement which reappeared even in 1830. This perfect *muscadin* seemed to be about thirty years of age; he had the air of a well-bred man and a consciousness of some kind of superiority seemed to lurk beneath coxcombry that almost reached the pitch of insolence. His pallid countenance looked as though there was not a single drop of blood in it; there was a sardonic turn about the sharp, short nose; it put you in mind of a skull, and the green eyes were inscrutable; they told no more than the thin, pinched lips chose to tell.

The man in the cinnamon-brown coat seemed almost genial, compared with this thin, wizened young man, who twirled a rattan cane with a gold knob that glittered in the sunshine; the first might be willing to take the executioner's place; but the second would not hesitate to ensnare innocence and beauty and virtue in the toils of slander and intrigue, and drowned or poisoned his victims with perfect equanimity. The red-faced man would have tried to cheer up the victim with rough jokes; the other would not so much as smile. The first, a man of forty-five, had evidently a weakness for women and good cheer. Such men have always some appetite which

makes them the slaves of their calling. But his companion had neither vices nor passions. He was a born spy; he was in the diplomatic service; his was a love of art for art's sake. He found the ideas, his fellow carried them out; he represented the thought, the other was its outward and visible manifestation.

"This must surely be Gondreville, my good woman," the younger man began.

"People hereabouts don't say 'my good woman,'" answered Michu. "We plain folk still call each other plain 'citizen' and 'citizeness' out here."

"Oh!" returned the young man, in the most natural way in the world. He did not seem to be at all put out.

It sometimes happens that a card player, in the middle of a run of luck, feels that his luck is broken at the sight of a new face opposite; the man's voice, manner, and expression, like his way of shuffling the cards, are so many warnings of defeat. All gamblers, and écarté players especially, know this sensation. Michu felt something of the kind, a prophetic collapse. Dim forebodings of death, a confused vision of the scaffold, flashed across his mind; a voice cried that this *muscadin* would be his death, though as yet the two men were total strangers. So he had spoken rudely; he was and meant to be uncivil.

"You are State Councillor Malin's man, aren't you?" asked the second man from Paris.

"I am my own master," returned Michu.

The younger man turned to the women, and said, in the most polite manner, "Are we at Gondreville, ladies? That is all we want to know; M. Malin is expecting us."

"There is the park," said Michu, pointing to the open iron gate.

"And why are you hiding that rifle, my pretty child?" said the jovial personage (he had caught a glimpse of the barrel as he came through the gate).

"Always at it, even in the country," smiled the younger man. A thought struck them both; they turned back, and

Michu read their suspicions in spite of their impassive faces. Marthe allowed them to look at the rifle, Couraut barking all the time; she felt convinced that her husband was meditating some dark deed, and was almost pleased by the stranger's perspicacity. Michu flung her a glance that made her tremble; then he took up the rifle and set about loading it with a bullet, accepting all the consequences of the encounter and risk of possible detection. It seemed as if he did not value his life in the least, and his wife clearly understood his fatal resolution.

"So you have wolves in these parts, have you?" asked the younger man.

"There are always wolves wherever there are sheep. You are in Champagne, and yonder there is a forest. But we have wild boars as well, and we have big and small game, we have some of all sorts," said Michu, in a sarcastic tone.

The two men exchanged glances, and the older said, "I'll wager, Corentin, that this is that Michu fellow——"

"We did not herd pigs together that I know of," said the bailiff.

"No, but we have presided over Jacobins, citizen," returned the cynical elder,—"you at Arcis, and I elsewhere. You keep up the courtesy of the carmagnole, but it is out of fashion now, my boy."

"The park is large, I think we might lose ourselves in it; since you are the bailiff, you can show us the way to the château," the man addressed as Corentin remarked in a peremptory tone.

Michu whistled for his boy and continued to ram home the charge. Corentin looked Marthe over with indifferent eyes, whereas his companion seemed to be charmed with her; but Corentin saw traces of anguish that escaped the notice of the old libertine who took alarm at the rifle. And in this little, yet important trifle, the two men's whole characters were revealed.

"I have an appointment on the other side of the forest," said Michu; "I cannot go with you myself, but my boy here will show you the way to the château. What way can you

have come to Gondreville? Did you go round by Cinq-Cygne?"

"Like you, we had something on hand in the forest," said Corentin, without a trace of irony in his manner.

"François!" called Michu, "show these gentlemen the way to the château; take them along the bypaths, so that they will meet no one on the way; they are to keep clear of beaten tracks.—Come here a minute!" he added, seeing that the two men had turned their backs and walked away, talking together in a low voice.

Michu caught up the child and kissed him almost solemnly, with a look in his face that confirmed his wife's fears. A cold shiver ran down her back; she looked at her mother, but her eyes were dry; she was past crying.

"Off with you," said Michu, addressing the boy. And he watched him out of sight.

Couraut began to bark again, this time in the direction of Grouage.

"Oh! there's Violette. That is the third time that he has been past here since the morning. What can be going on? That will do, Couraut!"

A few minutes later they heard a horse come trotting on the road, and Violette, mounted on one of the ponies much in use among farmers round about Paris, showed his face. It was a deeply wrinkled countenance, the color of wood, looking all the darker under the shadow of a round, broad-brimmed hat. His gray, malevolent, bright eyes dissembled the treachery of his character. A pair of thin legs, covered to the knees with linen gaiters, hung unsupported by the stirrups, so that they were kept in position, to all appearance, by the weight of his thick, hobnailed boots. His gray hair fell in curls at the back of his head over a *limousine*, a rough black and white striped carter's cloak, which he wore over his short jacket. The man's clothes, his short-legged gray pony, his way of riding, with his chest thrown out and shoulders thrown back, the jagged and worn bridle held in a coarse, chapped, earth-colored hand,—everything about Violette gave the impression

that this was a grasping, ambitious peasant, who means to own land and will have it at all costs. The line of his mouth, with its bluish lip, might have been cut by a surgeon's bistoury; his face and forehead were so furrowed by innumerable wrinkles, that all flexibility was lost, and such expression as it possessed lay wholly in the contours. There seemed to be a menace in the hard, sharply cut lines, in spite of the air of humility which almost all country people can assume to hide their feelings and their schemes, a humility which answers the same purpose as the imperturbable gravity of the Oriental and the savage.

Violette had been a day laborer. He had come to be the servant of Grouage by a system of ever-increasing malevolence, and he still kept up that system though he had reached a position far above his first aspirations. He wished ill to his neighbor and he wished it fervently; if he had the chance he would help him to ill-luck, and it was a labor of love. Violette was frankly envious, but with all his malevolence, he kept within the limits of the law, precisely as the Opposition does, and neither more nor less. It was his belief that his own success depended upon the failure of others; every one above him was an enemy against whom any weapons were fair. This is a very common type of character among the peasants. His great affair of the moment was to obtain from Malin an extension of his lease, which had but six years to run. He was jealous of Michu's success, so he kept a close watch over him. The peasants used to tease Violette about his intimacy with the Michus; but with a hope of another twelve years' lease before his eyes, the cunning farmer was on the watch to do a service to the Government or to Malin, and he knew that Malin distrusted Michu. With the help of the gamekeeper at Gondreville, the rural policeman, and the peasant folk that gathered firewood, Violette kept the commissary at Arcis informed of every little thing that Michu did. That functionary had failed to enlist Marianne, the servant-girl, in the interests of the Government; but Violette and his confederates knew all that went on through Gaucher,

the lad, bribing him with trifles, such as waistcoats, buckles, cotton stockings, and nice things to eat. Michu trusted Gaucher, and the boy, for that matter, had no suspicion that his gossip could do any harm. Michu did not know that Violette blackened and distorted everything that he did, and made a crime of every action with the wildest suppositions; but he knew the man's vile motive for coming so often to the house, and amused himself by mystifying him.

"What, here again! You must have a good deal to do over at Bellache," said Michu.

"Again! is a word of reproach, M. Michu. You don't reckon to play the sparrows a tune on such a clarionet, do you? I did not know you had that rifle——"

"It came up in one of my fields where rifles grow," returned Michu. "Stay, this is how I sow them." He pointed the gun at a viper thirty paces away and cut the reptile in two.

"Did you get that highwayman's weapon to protect your master? Perhaps he made you a present of it."

"Came down from Paris on purpose," said Michu.

"It is a fact that there is a good deal of talk about his journey, all over the countryside. Some say that he is in disgrace, and some that he wants to see his way clear here.—And, come to think of it, why should he drop down on us without a word of warning, just like the First Consul?"

"I am not such a friend of his as to be in his confidence."

"Then you have not seen him yet?"

"I did not know that he was here till I came back from my round in the forest," said Michu, reloading his rifle.

"He has sent to Arcis for M. Grévin; they will be tribuning something or other."

(Malin had been a tribune once.)

"If you are going in the direction of Cinq-Cygne, you can take me with you; I am going that way," said Michu, turning to Violette.

But Violette was too timorous to take such a man as Michu up behind him; he set spurs to his horse; and the Judas of Gondreville, gun on shoulder, made a dash for the avenue.

"Who can Michu have in his mind?" said Marthe when he had gone.

"He has looked very dark ever since he knew that M. Malin was here," said her mother. "But it is damp; let us go in."

The two women were sitting in the chimney-corner when Couraut began to bark.

"There is Michu!" cried Marthe.

And indeed it was Michu who came upstairs. His wife in anxiety went to him in their room.

"See if there is any one in the house," he said in an unsteady voice.

"No one," she said; "Marianne is out in the field with the cow, and Gaucher——"

"Where is Gaucher?"

"I do not know."

"I have my doubts of that young rogue. Go up to the garret and make a thorough search; look for him in every nook and corner in the place."

Marthe went. When she came back again, her husband was on his knees at his prayers.

"What is the matter?" she asked, in dismay. Michu put his arms about her waist, drew her towards him, kissed her on her forehead, and said unsteadily, "If we are never to see each other again, you ought to know how much I have loved you, my poor wife. There is a letter for you in a round tin box buried at the foot of the larch yonder in that clump of trees," he continued after a pause, indicating the tree as he spoke. "Follow the instructions in the letter from point to point. Do not touch it till after my death. After all, whatever may happen to me, think, in spite of men's injustice, that this arm of mine dealt justice for God."

Marthe's face had grown paler and paler till she was white as her linen. Her eyes were wide with terror; she gazed fixedly at her husband, and tried to speak, but her throat was parched. Michu slipped from her like a shadow. He had tied Couraut fast to the bed-foot, and the animal began to howl in despair.

Michu had serious cause to be angry with M. Marion; but all his anger was transferred to a man far more criminal in his opinion, and that man was Malin. Malin's secrets were open to the bailiff's eyes. No one was so well qualified to appreciate the State Councillor's conduct. In matters political, Michu's father-in-law had been in Malin's confidence at the time when Malin was nominated, through Grévin's diligence, to represent the Aube in the Convention.

Perhaps it may be worth while to explain how the Simeuses and the Cinq-Cygnes came to confront Malin, and to show that the circumstances that weighed so heavily on the destiny of the twins and Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, weighed yet more heavily on Marthe and Michu.

The Hôtel Cinq-Cygne at Troyes stood opposite the Hôtel Simeuse. When a populace let loose by hands no less cunning than prudent had sacked the Hôtel Simeuse; when the Marquis and Marquise had been discovered and delivered over to the National Guard, who took them to prison on a charge of corresponding with the enemies of the Nation; then the mob, arguing logically, raised the shout, "To the Cinq-Cygnes!" It was inconceivable to them that the Cinq-Cygnes should be innocent of the crimes of the Simeuses.

The brave old Marquis de Simeuse had two sons, two lads of eighteen; he was afraid that their courage might get them into trouble; and to save them he sent them, a few minutes before the storm broke, to their aunt, the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne. Two attached servants locked the young men into the house. The old Marquis bade them keep everything from his sons' knowledge if the worst came to the worst. Laurence de Cinq-Cygne, then a girl of twelve, loved both her cousins equally, nor of the two brothers could it be said which loved her best. The likeness between the two Simeuses, as often happens with twins, was so strong that for a long while their mother dressed them in different colors so as to know them apart. The first born was named Paul Marie; the younger, Marie Paul.

Laurence de Cinq-Cygne was in the secret of the situation;

the girl played a woman's part excellently well. She coaxed and implored, and kept her cousins in the house till the mob surrounded the Hôtel Cinq-Cygne. The brothers learned the danger at the same moment, and exchanged their thoughts in a single glance. They decided on their course at once. Their two servants and the Comtesse's men were armed, the doors barricaded, the shutters closed, and the two young men appeared at a window with five servants behind them and the Abbé d'Hauteserre, a relative of the Cinq-Cygnes. The eight brave men opened a murderous fire on the mob. Every shot killed or wounded an assailant. Laurence, instead of giving way to despair, loaded and reloaded for them with extraordinary coolness, and served out bullets and powder. The Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne threw herself on her knees and began to pray.

"What are you doing, mother?" asked Laurence.

"I am praying for them and for you."

Sublime words spoken once before under similar circumstances, by the mother of the Prince de la Paix in Spain. Eleven men were killed and lay among the wounded in the street. A reception of this kind may have a cooling or an exciting effect on a mob; they either warm to their work or they give up. The men in front fell back in panic, but the crowd behind had come to plunder and slay, and at the sight of their dead, they raised a howl of "Murder!"

Prudent folk went off in search of the Representative of the People. Meanwhile, the brothers had heard the history of the day's fatal events; they suspected the Representative of a wish to ruin their house; suspicion soon became a certainty, and hot for vengeance they took up their places under the arched gateway, loaded their guns ready to shoot down Malin as soon as he showed himself. The Countess lost her head completely; she saw her house in ashes, her daughter murdered before her eyes, and reproached her nephews for a gallant defence that set all France talking for a week. Laurence opened the door a few inches in reply to Malin's summons. At sight of her he came in, relying on his own

formidable reputation and the child's helplessness. But when he demanded the reason for this armed resistance, she cut him short at the first word.

"What, sir, do you give liberty to France, and cannot protect people in their own houses? They want to murder us and pull down our hôtel; have we no right to keep them out by force?"

Malin stood nailed to the spot.

"You! the grandson of a bricklayer employed by the Great Marquis to build his château, allow our father to be dragged away to prison, on the strength of a slanderous lie!" cried Marie Paul.

Malin saw each young man clutch convulsively at his rifle, and gave himself up for lost. "He shall be set at liberty," he said.

"That promise of yours has saved your life," Marie Paul said solemnly. "But if it is not fulfilled by to-night, we shall know where to find you again."

"As for that howling mob outside," added Laurence, "unless you send them away, the first shot from the window shall be for you. Now, M. Malin, go out!"

Malin went out and harangued the crowd. He talked about the sacredness of the hearth, the right of *habeas corpus*, and the fact that an Englishman's house is his castle. He said that the Law and the People were supreme; that the Law meant the People; that the People should only act through the Law, and that might should always be on the side of right. Dire necessity gave him eloquence. The mob dispersed. But he never forgot that scorn in the faces of the Simeuses, nor the tone of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's "Go out!"

So, when the Cinq-Cygne lands were sold by the Nation (Laurence's brother, the Comte de Cinq-Cygne, being an *émigré*), the partition was made strictly. The agents of the District, acting on Malin's instructions, left Laurence nothing but the château, the park and gardens, and the farm of Cinq-Cygne, for Laurence had no right to more than her

légitime, the minimum share of the inheritance secured by law to each child. The Nation stood in the place of the Comte de Gondreville, especially since he had taken arms against the Republic.

The night after this stormy outbreak, Laurence prayed her cousins to leave France. She begged so earnestly, fearing that Malin's treachery might ensnare them, that they took horse and reached the outposts of the Prussian army. They had scarcely reached the forest of Gondreville before the Hôtel Cinq-Cygne was surrounded. Malin, Representative of the People, came himself and in force to arrest the heirs of the House of Simeuse. He did not venture to lay hands on the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, who was ill in bed with a terrible attack of nervous fever, nor yet on Laurence, a child of twelve. The servants, in terror of the Republic and its severity, had all disappeared.

Next morning the news of the stand made by the two brothers, and of their flight to Prussia, had spread all about the neighborhood. Three thousand persons gathered in front of the Hôtel Cinq-Cygne, and the house was pulled down with inexplicable rapidity. Madame de Cinq-Cygne was removed to the Hôtel Simeuse, where she died in a second attack of fever.

Michu only appeared on the political scene after all these things had taken place, for the Marquis and Marquise remained in prison for five months. The representative of the Aube, meanwhile, was away on a mission. But now that Marion had sold Gondreville to Malin, and the popular ebullition was forgotten in the country, Michu understood Malin thoroughly, or at any rate thought that he understood him; for Malin, like Fouché, was one of those many-sided men with unfathomed depths under every side of their characters, who are inscrutable at the time, and can only be understood long after the game is over.

Before taking any important step in life, Malin never failed to take counsel with his faithful friend Grévin the notary at Arcis. Grévin's judgment on men and things

a distance was sound, clear-sighted, and accurate. Such a habit is the wisdom of a second-rate man and the source of his strength. Now, in November, 1803, the State Councillor's position was so critical that a letter might have compromised the friends. Malin's nomination as a senator was certain; he was afraid to have an explanation in Paris; so he left his town house and came out to Gondreville, choosing from among several reasons for his departure, that one which should give him an air of zeal in Bonaparte's eyes, though he thought not of the State, but wholly of himself.

So while Michu lay in wait, and followed him in the park watching like a savage, for the ripe moment for his revenge, the politic Malin, with his habit of squeezing his own advantage out of every event, had brought his friend to walk in a little space of grass in the English garden. It was a lonely spot, well adapted to secret conferences. The pair therefore were standing together in the middle of the grass plot, talking in such low tones that no one at a distance could overhear them, while they could change the conversation so soon as any listener approached.

"Why not have stayed in a room at the château?" asked Grévin.

"Did you not see those two men that the Prefect of Police has sent me?"

(Though Fouché had been the soul of the consular cabinet in the affair of the plot in which Pichegru, Georges, Moreau, and Polignac were involved, he was not at that time the Minister of Police, but an ordinary State Councillor like Malin himself.)

"Those two men are Fouché's two arms," he continued. "One of them put an end to the rising in the West in a fortnight in the year VII. That was that young *muscadin* with vinegar on his lips, and verjuice in his eyes, and a face like a decanter of lemonade. The other is one of Lenoir's brood, the only man to whom the great traditions of the old police were handed down. I simply asked for an ordinary detective, backed up by an accredited agent; and they send

me yonder pair of sharpers. Ah! Grévin, Fouché has a mind to know my game, beyond a doubt. That is why I left those gentlemen to finish their dinner at the château. Let them look where they like, they will not find Louis XVIII. there, nor the slightest clue."

"Well and good; but what may this game be that you are playing?"

"Eh! a double game, my friend, is dangerous; but so far as Fouché is concerned, this is a triple game. I am in the confidence of the Bourbons, and it is possible that he has got wind of it."

"You in the confidence of the Bourbons?"

"Yes."

"Then you do not remember Favras?"

The remark seemed to make an impression on the Councillor.

"Since when?" continued Grévin after a pause.

"Since the Consul was appointed for life."

"But there are no proofs?"

"Not *that!*" said Malin, clicking his thumb nail against his front teeth.

In a few words Malin gave his friend a concise sketch of the critical position into which Bonaparte was forcing England. The national existence of England was threatened by the camp at Boulogne. Malin explained the extent of a plan of invasion, of which France and Europe knew nothing, albeit Pitt had his suspicions of it. Then he sketched the critical position into which England in turn was forcing Bonaparte. A formidable coalition,—Prussia, Austria, and Russia,—subsidized by English gold, was to bring seven hundred thousand men into the field. And at the same time, France was encompassed by an appalling network of conspiracy which united the Mountain, the Chouans, the Royalist party, and the Princes.

"So long as Louis XVIII. had three consuls to deal with he believed that anarchy would continue, and, favored by some movement or other, he hoped to play a return match

for the 13th Vendémiaire and the 18th Fructidor," said Malin. "But this consulship for life has unmasked Bonaparte's designs. He will be Emperor before long. The sub-lieutenant of old days is thinking of founding a dynasty! So this time it is an attempt on his life; and they are setting about it even more cleverly than they did in that Rue Saint Nicaise business. Pichegru, Georges, Moreau, and the Duc d'Enghien are in it, so are two of the Comte d'Artois' friends—Polignac and Rivière."

"What a combination!" exclaimed Grévin.

"France is honeycombed with conspiracy under the surface. They want the assault to be general; no stone will be left unturned. A hundred energetic men with Georges at their head are to set upon the Consular Guard and the Consul, man to man."

"Very well; denounce them."

"The Consul, the Minister of Police, the Prefect, and Fouché have held some of the threads of this widespread web these two months past. But they do not know the whole extent of it; and at the present moment they are leaving almost all the conspirators at liberty, so as to find out all."

"As to right," continued the notary, "the Bourbons have far more right to conceive and plan and execute an attempt against Bonaparte, than Bonaparte had to conspire on the 18th Brumaire against the Republic. He was a son of the Republic; he slew his mother; whereas the Bourbons want to come back to their house. The list of *émigrés* was closed, and names have been continually struck out of it; the Roman Catholic religion has been restored, and reactionary decrees are multiplied. I can understand that the Princes, seeing all this, know that their return would be a difficult business, not to say impossible. Bonaparte becomes the one obstacle in the way, and they wish to clear away the obstacle. Nothing more simple. If the conspirators fail, they are brigands; if they succeed, they will be heroes. Under the circumstances your hesitation seems to me to be natural enough."

"This is the question," said Malin. "The Duc d'Enghien's head is to be flung down to the Bourbons, as the Convention flung down the head of Louis XVI. to the Kings of Europe; and Bonaparte must be made to do it. Then he will be as much implicated as the rest of us in the courses of the Revolution; or else the present idol of the French nation and their future Emperor will be hurled down, and the real throne will be raised on the wreck of his greatness. I am at the mercy of events; of a well-directed bullet; of another and more successful machine like the one in the Rue Saint Nicaise. I have not been told everything. The proposal was that I should rally the Council of State at the critical moment, and control the action of the legal machinery that will bring about the restoration of the Bourbons."

"Wait," suggested the notary.

"I cannot wait. I have only this present moment in which to make up my mind."

"How so?"

"The two Simeuses are in the plot. They are here in the neighborhood. I must either raise a pursuit, allow them to commit themselves and rid myself of them, or else protect them secretly. I asked for understrappers, and they send me the pick of their lynxes; and send them through Troyes so that they may have the gendarmerie at their orders."

"Gondreville is a bird in the hand, the conspiracy is a bird in the bush," pronounced Grévin. "Neither Fouché nor Talleyrand, your two partners, are in it. Be aboveboard with them. What! every man that cut off King Louis' head is in the Government, France is full of buyers of National lands, and you must try to bring back those that will want Gondreville again! Unless the Bourbons are downright idiots they will be sure to pass a sponge over all that we have done. Warn Bonaparte."

"A man of my rank does not stoop to denounce," Malin answered quickly.

"Your rank?" cried Grévin, with a smile.

"I have been offered the Seals."

"I can understand that you feel dazzled; it is my duty to see clearly through this political darkness, to smell the way out. Now it is impossible to foresee events that might bring back the Bourbons, when a General Bonaparte has eighty men-of-war and four hundred thousand men. It is an even harder thing, in political forecasts, to know how long it may be before a tottering power will fall. But Bonaparte's power is still in the growing stage, old fellow. . . . Is it not more likely that Fouché has set some one on to sound you, so as to know the bottom of your mind and get rid of you?"

"No. I am sure of the ambassador. And what is more, Fouché would not send me such a pair of apes; for I know them too well not to have my suspicions."

"I am afraid of them," answered Grévin. "Why did Fouché send them, if he does not bear you a grudge, and has no wish to put you to the proof? Fouché is not the man to play such a trick without some reason for it."

"That decides me!" exclaimed Malin. "I shall never be at peace with those two Simeuses. Perhaps Fouché, who knows my position, has no mind to miss them, and thinks to get at Condé through them."

"Eh! old man, the owner of Gondreville is not likely to be disturbed under Bonaparte!"

Malin happening to look up just then, caught sight of a gun-barrel gleaming among the leaves of a great lime tree.

"I thought I heard a click as if some one cocked a trigger, and I was not mistaken," he remarked, as he took his stand behind the trunk of a large tree. The notary followed him, startled by the sudden move.

"It is Michu," he said. "I can see his red beard."

"Don't look as if you were frightened," resumed Malin, and he walked slowly away. "What can the man want with owners of this place, for he certainly was not aiming at you," he repeated again and again. "If he overheard us, it is

my duty to recommend him to the prayers of the congregation! We should have done better to go out into the plain. Who the devil would have thought of distrusting the wind that blows?"

"Live and learn," said the notary; "but he was a long way off, and we were talking close together."

"I will just mention it to Corentin," returned Malin.

A few minutes later, Michu came home again with a white, drawn face.

"What is the matter with you?" cried his terrified wife.

"Nothing," returned Michu. He saw that Violette was in the house; and for him the man's presence was like a thunderbolt.

Michu took a chair and sat down quietly by the fire. He drew out a letter from a tin canister, such as soldiers use to keep their papers in, and flung the sheet on the flames. This circumstance, and Marthe's deep sigh of relief as if some enormous weight were lifted off her mind, tickled Violette's curiosity not a little. Michu leant his rifle against the chimney-piece with wonderful coolness. Marianne and the mother and Marthe were spinning in the lamplight.

"Come, François," said the bailiff. "Come along to bed, will you!"

He took the child roughly by the waist and carried him off. Outside upon the staircase he dropped his voice to a whisper.

"Go down into the cellar," he said in the little lad's ear. "Take two bottles of Mâcon, empty out one-third of each, and fill them up with the cognac that stands on the shelf of bottles; then take another bottle and fill it half with white wine, and half with brandy. Do it very neatly, and put the three bottles on the top of the empty barrel by the cellar door. As soon as you hear me open the window, come out of the cellar, saddle my horse, ride off to the Knaves' Gibbet, and wait for me there."

"The little rascal never will go to bed," said Michu when

he came back. "He wants to do like grown-up people, and hear and see and know all that is going on. You set my folk a bad example, Daddy Violette."

"Good Lord!" cried Violette, "who has loosened your tongue? You never said so much in your life before."

"Do you think that I let you come and spy on me, and don't see it? You are on the wrong track, Daddy Violette. If you were on my side instead of the side of them that bear me a grudge, I would do better yet for you than a renewal of your lease."

"Better yet? What's that?" asked the rapacious peasant, opening wide eyes.

"I would sell you my land, cheap."

"No bargain is cheap so long as there's something to pay," Violette remarked sententiously.

"I want to leave the neighborhood, and I will give you my farm at Mousseau,—steadings, standing crops, and live stock,—for fifty thousand francs."

"Really?"

"Does that suit you?"

"Lord, one must see."

"Let us talk it over. But I want a handsel."

"I have nothing."

"A word."

"Two if you like!"

"Tell me who sent you here just now?"

"I had gone and come back again, and I thought I would just look in and wish you a good night."

"Come back again and left your horse behind! For what kind of an idiot do you take me? It is a lie; you shall not have my farm."

"Well, then, it was M. Grévin, it was. He said to me, 'Violette, we want Michu; go and look for him, and if he is not in, wait till he comes.' I thought he meant me to stop here for the evening."

"Are those sharks from Paris still at the château?"

"Ah, I am not so sure; but there were people in the drawing-room."

"You shall have my farm. Let us settle the business. Wife, go and find wine for the bargain. Bring us some of the best Roussillon, that belonged to the ex-Marquis. . . . We are not children. You will find a couple of bottles on the empty barrel by the cellar door, and a bottle of white wine."

"It is a bargain," said Violette, who never got flustered with liquor. "Let us drink."

"You have fifty thousand francs under the bricks on the floor of your bedroom, all along under the bed; and you are going to pay them over to me a fortnight after old Grévin has passed the contract."

Violette's eyes were fixed in a stare on Michu's face; he grew ghastly pale.

"Aha! You come sneaking round an old hand of a Jacobin that had the honor to preside over the Arcis Club, and imagine that he will not see through you. I have eyes in my head. I saw that your floor had been newly laid, and I felt sure that you had not taken it up to sow corn there. Let us drink."

Violette was troubled. He drank off a large glass without noticing the strength of the liquor; terror was like a hot iron in his vitals, and greed burned hotter than the brandy. He would have given a good deal to be at home again, so as to change the position of his hoard. The three women smiled.

"Does that suit you?" continued Michu, refilling Violette's glass.

"Why, yes."

"You will be under your own roof, you old rogue!"

Half an hour of warm discussion ensued over the date of taking possession and the endless points that peasants raise over a bargain. Assertions were made, and glasses drained, there were specious promises and denials, and exclamations—"That is true, eh!"—"Quite true."—"That is

my last word!"—"As I said before!"—"I wish I may have my throat cut if——"—"May the wine poison me if I am not telling the truth"—when in the midst of it all Violette lurched forward and lay with his head on the table; not tipsy, but dead drunk. Michu, watching him, had hurried to the window and opened it, when the man's eyes grew troubled.

"Where is that rascal Gaucher?" he asked, turning to his wife.

"He is in bed."

"Go and sit across his door, Marianne," said the bailiff, addressing the girl, "and keep a watch on him. And you, mother, stay downstairs and just look after this spy here. Keep a sharp lookout, and don't open the door to any one but François. It is a matter of life and death!" he added in a deep voice. "Every creature under this roof must say that I have not left the house to-night; stick to that with your heads on the block!" Then to his wife, "Come, mother, come, put on your shoes and your coif, and we must be off! No questions; I am coming with you."

For the last three-quarters of an hour there had been a despotic, irresistible authority in the man's eyes and gestures. There is a mysterious source from which men draw this extraordinary power; it is common to the great captain who can flash fire through the ranks of men on the battlefield, to the great orator who carries away his audience, and, let us admit it, the great criminal draws on the same source for his most daring crimes. An invincible influence seems at such times to emanate from the man's brain; his words are fraught with it; his movements seem to inject his will into others. The three women knew instinctively that some dreadful crisis was at hand; they felt it in the swiftness of his actions. Michu's face was glistening, his forehead spoke, his eyes shone like stars; they had seen the beads of sweat at the roots of his hair, and more than once his voice shook with impatience and rage. So Marthe obeyed him passively. Armed to the teeth, and gun on shoulder, Michu made a dash

for the avenue, his wife followed close behind him, and in a few minutes they reached the cross-roads where François was waiting hidden among the brushwood.

"The boy has sense," Michu remarked, as he noticed this. It was the first word that he had spoken. His wife had been running so fast that she was breathless and could not speak.

"Go back to the lodge, hide in the thickest tree by the house, and watch the country and the park," said Michu, turning to his son. "We are all abed, mind; we shall not open to anybody. Your grandmother is sitting up, but she will not stir until she hears you speak. Keep every word in mind. It is a matter of life and death for your father and mother. It must never come out in a court of law that we spent the night out of doors."

These words were spoken in the child's ear. François slipped away through the bushes, like an eel through the mud, and Michu turned to his wife.

"Up with you," he cried, "and pray God to be with us. Hold tight! The mare may drop dead."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth before the animal started off like a race-horse at a blow from Michu's heels and a strong grip of his knees. In a quarter of an hour they were clear of the forest. Michu had kept to the short cut, through the darkness, and they stood on the skirts of the wood, and saw the roof ridges of the château of Cinq-Cygne lying in the moonlight. Michu tied the horse to a tree, and sprang lightly up a knoll which overlooked the valley of Cinq-Cygne.

The château on which Marthe and Michu looked down for a moment was a picturesque detail in the landscape. It was neither large nor of any importance from an architectural point of view, yet it possessed a certain amount of archæological interest. The old fifteenth century edifice stood on rising ground, encircled by a large walled moat, still full of water. The walls were built of rubble, but they were seven feet thick, and the very plainness of the structure gave an admirable idea of the rough, warrior life of feudal times.

It was a very quaint château, consisting of two massive reddish-colored towers connected by a long building, with true *croisées*—mullion windows with stone bars in the form of a cross rudely carved like vine stems. The staircase rose outside the château in a pentagonal tower set in the middle of the front, and was only accessible through a narrow door with a pointed arch.

The ground floor and the first story had been modernized in the time of Louis Quatorze, and the huge roof above had been pierced with dormer windows, each surmounted by a carved tympanum.

In front of the house spread a great lawn divided in two by a paved way through the middle. On either side of this lawn stood the various stables, cow-sheds, and poultry yards, the bakery, and other outbuildings raised on the ruins of the two wings of the feudal castle. The great trees which grew on the lawn itself had only recently been felled. Two little huts in which the gardeners lived stood on either side of the bridge over the moat; the iron gateway between them was of feeble design and evidently modern. In former times no doubt the château had been a square building about a central court, with towers at the four angles and a massive round arched gateway to defend the drawbridge where the modern iron gateway stood. All this had disappeared, but the two massive towers with their pepper-box roofs had escaped destruction, and these with the bell turret in the middle formed the principal features of the village. The spire of the church, another old building only a few paces away, harmonized with the mass of the castle.

All the roofs and domes shone out brightly in the fitful gleams of moonlight. Michu was looking down upon the stately house in a way that worked a complete change in his wife's thoughts concerning him; his face was calmer, there was hope and a kind of pride in his expression. He looked round the horizon with a certain uneasiness, and listened to all the sounds over the countryside. It must have been nine o'clock by this time; the moon shone down upon the edge

of the forest, and the knoll was most brightly lighted of all. This state of things the bailiff apparently considered to be dangerous, for he came down as though he were afraid of being seen. Yet there was not a sound to trouble the stillness in the beautiful valley shut in upon this side by the Forest of Nodesme.

Marthe, trembling and exhausted, was expecting something to happen after such a ride. For what were her services required? For a good deed or a crime? Michu came up and whispered, "You are to go to the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne; ask to speak with her, and when she comes, ask for a word with her in private. When no one can overhear you, say, 'Mademoiselle, your cousins are in danger of their lives. Some one is waiting for you outside to explain the why and wherefore.' If she seems afraid, if she cannot trust you, say, 'They are involved in a plot against the First Consul and the plot is discovered.' Don't give your name; they suspect us too much."

Marthe Michu raised her face, and looked up at her husband.

"Michu, are you doing this for them?" she asked.

"Well, and if I am?" asked he, knitting his brows. He took her question for a reproach.

"You do not understand," she said; and suddenly she fell on her knees before him and took his big hand in hers, and kissed it and covered it with tears.

"Make haste!" he said; "you can cry afterwards;" and for a moment he held her tightly in his arms.

When the sound of his wife's footsteps had died away, there were tears in the eyes of this man of iron. He had distrusted Marthe on account of her father's opinions; he had kept the secrets of his life from her; and now the beauty of his wife's simple nature had been suddenly revealed to him, just as the greatness of his own character had dawned upon her. Marthe passed from the uttermost depths of humiliation—from the woman's feeling that she is degraded by the baseness of the man whose name she bears—to a rapture

of glory; passed suddenly and without transition. Would it have been wonderful if her strength had failed her? The sharpest fear had preyed upon her mind on the way from the lodge to Cinq-Cygne; she had "walked through blood," as she told her husband afterwards; and now in a moment she felt herself caught up to heaven among the angels. And he, who felt that he was not appreciated, who took his wife's melancholy and drooping attitude for want of affection, who had lived out of the house so as to leave her to herself, and centered all his affection upon their child—he understood in a moment all that her tears meant, and knew that she cursed the part that her fair face and her father's will had forced her to play. Out of the midst of the storm the brightest flame of joy had leapt out for them like a lightning-flash. A lightning-flash indeed! Each of them thought of those ten years of misunderstanding and took the whole blame of them. Michu stood motionless, lost in deep musings, resting one arm on his gun and his chin on his arm. Such a moment atoned for all the pain of the most painful past.

The same thoughts were working in Marthe's mind, and her heart was heavy at the thought of the danger the Simeuses were running; she understood the whole position, even the faces of the two men from Paris, but she could not explain the rifles to herself. She fled like a fawn till she reached the roadway, and was startled by the footsteps of a man behind her. She cried out; it was Michu's big hand that stopped her mouth.

"Looking out from the top of the knoll, I saw the gleam of the silver rims of gendarmes' caps," he said. "They are some way off. Go round through the gap in the fosse between Mademoiselle's Tower and the stables; the dog will not bark at you; come up the garden and call to the Countess through the window; tell them to saddle mademoiselle's horse and to bring the animal through the gap. I shall be there. But first I am going to find out what these Parisians mean to do, and how to escape them."

The danger was coming down upon them like an ava-

lanche; the necessity of preparing for it gave Marthe wings.

The Frankish name, common to the Cinq-Cygnes and the Chargebœufs, was Duineff. The younger branch of the Chargebœufs took the name in consequence of a defence of the castle once made by five daughters of the house in the absence of their father. No one expected such conduct of the sisters, all of them famous for their white fairness. One of the early counts of Champagne gave them the beautiful name to preserve the memory of the deed so long as the family should live. Since this extraordinary feat of arms the daughters of the house carried their heads high, but perhaps not all of them were white as the Swans. Laurence, the last of her race, was an exception to the Salic law; she inherited the name, the fief, and the armorial bearings; for the King of France confirmed the charter granted by the Count of Champagne, in virtue of which the Cinq-Cygnes' lands and titles may be handed down from mother to son. So Laurence was Countess of Cinq-Cygne. Her husband must take her name and the arms of her house and their motto, *Mourir en chantant,* the heroic answer made by the eldest of the five sisters when summoned to surrender,—"they would *die singing.*" Laurence was a worthy descendant of those fair heroines; her whiteness seemed like a challenge to fate. The least outline of the blue veins could be seen beneath the delicate close tissue of skin; and hair of the prettiest shade of gold looked marvelously fair with eyes of the darkest blue. Everything about Laurence was tiny and delicate. But in spite of her slender shape and her milk-white skin, the soul that dwelt in her fragile body was tempered like that of a man of the loftiest character; no one, not even an observer, would have guessed this at sight of her gentle expression, her aquiline nose, and a vague suggestion of a sheep's head about her profile. Her exceeding gentleness, high-bred though it was, seemed almost to amount to lamb-like stupidity.

"I look like a dreaming sheep," she sometimes said of herself, with a smile.

Laurence, who said so little, appeared to be not so much

dreamy as torpid. In a grave crisis, the Judith dormant in her nature was revealed at once and grew sublime, and crises unfortunately had not been wanting.

At the age of thirteen, after the events which you already know, Laurence found herself an orphan, in a house in Troyes, opposite a heap of ruins which, but the day before, had been the Hôtel Cinq-Cygne—one of the most curious examples of sixteenth century architecture. M. d'Hauteserre, a relative, became her guardian, and carried off the heiress to the country, without loss of time. The Abbé d'Hauteserre, his brother, was shot down as he was escaping across the square, in peasant's dress; and this had frightened the worthy gentleman; he was in no position to defend his ward's interests. He had two sons in the army with the Princes; and every day of his life, at the slightest sound, he fancied that the Arcis authorities had come to arrest him. The old man bent before the stormy blast, and Laurence, proud of having stood a siege, proud, too, of the white fairness traditional in her house, looked down contemptuously upon his prudent cowardice. *She* only thought of adding lustre to her name. So she had the audacity to hang Charlotte Corday's portrait on the wall of her poverty-stricken sitting-room, and to crown the frame with a little wreath of oak leaves. She corresponded with the twins by messenger; the law punished the offence with death, but she set the law at naught; and the messenger brought answers back at the risk of his life.

Since those tragic days at Troyes, Laurence only lived for the Royalist cause. She had formed pretty sound conclusions as to Madame and Monsieur d'Hauteserre; she saw that they were good but feeble folk; the laws of her sphere did not apply to them. Laurence had too much sense, she was too genuinely indulgent to bear malice against the couple for being what they were; she was kind, amiable, affectionate with them, but she never gave any of her secrets into their keeping. And nothing so shuts up the soul as a life of dissimulation in the family circle. When Laurence came of age, she left the old gentleman to manage her property as be-

fore. If her favorite mare was well groomed, her maid, Catherine, dressed to her taste, and her boy-servant, Gothard, properly turned out, she cared little about anything else. She turned her thoughts to so lofty an end that she could not descend to occupations which would, no doubt, have been pleasant to her in different times. Laurence cared little for dress, and besides, her cousins were not there. She wore a bottle-green riding-habit, or a walking-dress of some cheap material, with a sleeveless bodice fastened with loops of twisted braid; and a loose silk wrapper in the house.

Gothard, her little squire, a quick-witted, mettled lad of fifteen, was her escort, for she was almost always out of doors. She shot over the whole Gondreville estate without any opposition from the tenants or Michu. She sat her horse to admiration, and in sport her skill bordered on the miraculous. The people in the countryside always called her "Mademoiselle" even during the Revolution.

Anybody who has read that great romance, *Rob Roy,* must remember Diana Vernon, for Scott in his conception of her character made one of his very rare departures from his ordinary uninteresting feminine types. That recollection may enable the reader to understand Laurence, if he endows the Scottish huntress with the repressed enthusiasm of a Charlotte Corday, and takes away the amiable liveliness that made Diana so charming.

Laurence had seen her mother die; she had seen the Abbé d'Hauteserre shot down, and the Marquis and Marquise de Simeuse had perished on the scaffold. Her only brother had died of his wounds, her cousins serving in the army of Condé might fall at any moment, and, finally, she had seen the lands of the Simeuses and the Cinq-Cygnes swallowed down, nominally by the Republic, while the Republic had not benefited thereby. Laurence's gravity, degenerating, to all appearance, into stupor, should be conceivable enough.

M. d'Hauteserre, at all events, proved himself a most upright and intelligent guardian. Under his administration Cinq-Cygne looked like a farm-house. The old gentleman

was as little as possible like a valiant knight-at-arms, and very much more like an improving landlord. He had turned a couple of hundred acres or so of park and gardens to good account; grew all that was wanted for the stables and the servants, and bought no firewood. Thanks to the strictest economy, the young Countess recovered a sufficient fortune by the time she came of age. Her surplus income was invested in the Funds. In 1798 the heiress derived an income of twenty thousand francs from government securities, on which, truth to tell, the interest was overdue, and twelve hundred francs from Cinq-Cygne, for the rent had been notably raised when the lease was renewed.

Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre had gone to live in the country on an annuity of three thousand francs in the Tontine Lafarge. They could not afford to live anywhere else on the scanty remains of their fortune, so they lived on at Cinq-Cygne, and Laurence's first act on coming of age had been to give them possession of one wing of the house for their lifetime. The d'Hauteserres were as penurious for their ward as they were for themselves. Every year they put by a thousand crowns for their two sons. The heiress lived on poor fare. The total annual expenditure of Cinq-Cygne did not exceed five thousand francs. But Laurence never went into details, and felt quite satisfied with everything. And her guardian and his wife unconsciously fell under the influence of a character which made itself felt even in the smallest trifles, and ended by admiring the girl whom they had known as a child. A thing that happens seldom enough. But in Laurence's manner, in her guttural voice, in her imperious glance, there was that indescribable something, that inexplicable power, which never fails to inspire awe; even when it is only the appearance of power; for in a fool vacuity is very easily mistaken for depth, as depth is beyond the comprehension of the ordinary mind. For which reasons many people admire anything that they do not understand.

Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre were impressed by the young Countess' habit of silence and her untamed ways;

they were always expecting something great of her. And aristocrat though she was, Laurence had won great respect from the peasants, for her discriminating kindness to them, and the fact that she was not to be deceived. Her name, her sex, her misfortunes, and her unusual life all combined to give her an ascendency over the people in the valley. Sometimes she set out, taking Gothard with her, and was absent all day or even for two days together; yet neither Monsieur nor Madame d'Hauteserre asked her why she had gone away. Laurence (it must be borne in mind) had nothing singular about her. The masculine nature was hidden beneath the most feminine and apparently delicate form. She had an extremely tender heart, but there was virile resolution and stoical fortitude in her head. Her clear-sighted eyes had not learned to shed tears. And no one could have imagined of that slender white wrist, with its faint tracery of blue veins, that it could outweary the arm of the most seasoned horseman; or that her hand, so soft and flexible as it was, could manage a pistol or a fowling-piece with the vigor of a practised sportsman. Out of doors and on horseback, Laurence's dress differed in no way from that of other women; she wore a black handkerchief knotted about her white throat, a coquettish little beaver hat and green veil, so that her complexion, delicate though it was, had never suffered from her long rides in the open air.

Under the Directory and the Consulate, Laurence might do as she pleased and no one gave her a thought. But when the Government became more settled, the newly constituted authorities, the Prefect of the Aube, Malin's friends, and Malin himself, all tried to discredit her.

Laurence's whole mind was engrossed by schemes for overturning Bonaparte. Bonaparte's ambition and triumph had wrought a kind of frenzy in her, but it was a frenzy of a cool and calculating kind.

In the depths of her valley, in the heart of the forest, her eyes were always fixed upon her purpose with a dreadful fixity of gaze; she, the unknown, obscure enemy of the

man who stood in the full light of glory, thought sometimes of slaying him in the grounds of Malmaison or St. Cloud. This purpose of hers would be in itself a sufficient explanation of her out-door life and habits; but after the Peace of Amiens she had been initiated into a conspiracy, a plot set on foot by men who thought to turn the 18th Brumaire against the First Consul. Since that time Laurence had brought her whole strength and the whole force of hate in her to bear upon a vast and well-contrived scheme for striking down Bonaparte. This was to be operated from without by the mighty coalition of Russia, Prussia, and Austria, which as Emperor he defeated at Austerlitz; and from within by another coalition of men belonging to the most hostile parties now united by a common hate. Many of these, like Laurence, meditated the death of the First Consul, and were not afraid of the word assassination.

At this moment, therefore, a girl, so fragile in appearance, so strong for those who really knew her, was a faithful and sure guide for the nobles who came to and fro between France and Germany to take part in this attack. Fouché was using this co-operation of *émigrés* beyond the Rhine as the basis of his scheme for entangling the Duc d'Enghien in the plot; and the presence of that Prince in the territory of Baden, so close to Strasbourg and the frontier, afterwards gave weight to the suspicion. The great question, whether the Prince really had cognizance of the plot, and intended to enter France in case of success, is one of the secrets on which the Bourbon Princes have chosen to keep absolute silence. Gradually, as the story of the time becomes ancient history, it will strike the impartial historian that it was imprudent, to say the least of it, in the Prince, to come so near the frontier at a time when a vast conspiracy was just about to break out, especially as the fact was certainly known to the whole royal family.

In every least thing involving the conspiracy, Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne displayed the same prudence which Malin showed when he brought Grévin into the open air for his

interview. She received emissaries, and conferred with them on the outskirts of the Forest of Nodesme, or at a place between Sézanne and Brienne, beyond the valley of Cinq-Cygne. She often rode between thirty and forty miles at a stretch with Gothard, and came back to Cinq-Cygne without the slightest trace of weariness or præoccupation on her fresh face. When Gothard was nine years old, she had read in his eyes the ingenuous admiration that children feel for anything extraordinary. She took the little cowherd for her squire, and taught him to rub down a horse as carefully and thoroughly as any English groom. Seeing the boy's willingness, intelligence, and disinterestedness, she made trial of his devotion, and found not only quick-wittedness but nobleness of nature in him. He had no thought of reward. She set herself to cultivate a nature so young as yet. She was kind to him, as a great lady is kind; attaching him to herself, by attaching herself to him; polishing a half-wild character, while leaving it all its sap and simplicity. And then, when she had sufficiently proved the almost dog-like faithfulness that she had nurtured, Gothard became her ingenious and ingenuous confederate. Nobody could suspect the little peasant boy; he went several times from Cinq-Cygne to Nancy, and nobody knew that he had been from home.

Gothard practised every shift and stratagem known to spies. The excessive suspicion inculcated by his mistress was by no means foreign to his nature. With a woman's wit, a child's innocence, and the continual mental alertness of a conspirator, he hid these remarkable qualities under a countryman's torpor and unfathomable ignorance. The little man, to all appearance, was a clumsy, harmless rustic; but put him at his work, he was agile as a fish and slippery as an eel. Like a dog, he could understand a glance, and read thought by instinct. With his round, red, good-natured, homely face, his sleepy brown eyes, his hair cut in the peasant fashion, his childish dress, and his very slow growth, he still looked like a little boy of ten.

MM. d'Hauteserre and Simeuse, with several other *émigrés*,

had come by way of Alsace and Lorraine into Champagne, protected by their cousin Laurence, who had watched over them all the way from Strasbourg to Bar-sur-Aube. Another and no less adventurous band of conspirators had landed meanwhile under the cliffs of Normandy. The d'Hauteserres and Simeuses, disguised as laborers, had come on foot from forest to forest, guided from place to place by helpers chosen by Laurence herself. During the past three months she had found out the most devoted partisans of the Bourbons among those least liable to suspicion. The *émigrés* slept all day and marched at night. Each one had brought two devoted soldiers; one of these was sent on ahead, and another left behind to cover the retreat in case of disaster. Thanks to these military dispositions, the dear detachment had reached the Forest of Nodesme, their trysting-place, in safety. Another band of twenty-seven gentlemen came at the same time by way of Switzerland and Burgundy, taking similar precautions. Altogether M. de Rivière counted upon five hundred men, one hundred of them being young nobles, the officers of the devoted band.

MM. de Polignac and Rivière, whose behavior as leaders was extremely remarkable, kept the number of their accomplices a profound secret; their names were never known. It may, however, be said to-day, after the revelations that were made during the Restoration, that Bonaparte no more suspected the full extent of the risk that he ran in those days, than England imagined the peril with which she was threatened by the camp at Boulogne; and yet, at no time was the police system more intelligently and efficiently worked. At the time of the opening of this story, one of the poltroons that will always be found in every conspiracy which is not confined to a little band of strong spirits, a single conspirator when brought face to face with death gave information, luckily insufficient as to the extent, but precise enough as to the objects of the attempt. For which reason the police, as Malin had told Grévin, had left the conspirators at liberty while they watched them closely so as to follow up all the

ramifications of the plot. Still the hand of the Government had been in some sort forced by Georges Cadoudal, an energetic leader who took counsel with no one but himself, and lay in hiding in Paris with twenty-five Chouans, ready to attack the First Consul.

Love and hate were blended in Laurence's thoughts. To make an end of Bonaparte, and to bring back the Bourbons,—what was this but to regain Gondreville and to make her cousins' fortune? Those two opposite feelings are sufficient to bring out all the powers of the soul and all the forces of life, especially at the age of three and twenty. Never before had Laurence looked so beautiful to the folk at Cinq-Cygne as she had done of late during the past two months. There was a red color in her cheeks; hope, at some moments, lent pride to her brows; and when the *Gazette* was read aloud of an evening, and they heard the First Consul's conservative policy therein set forth, she would lower her eyes lest any one should see her conviction that the fall of Bonaparte was at hand.

Nobody at the Château suspected, therefore, that the Countess had seen her cousins on the previous night. Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre's two sons had slept in the Countess' own room, beneath the same roof with their father and mother; for Laurence, by way of precaution, admitted the two d'Hauteserres between one and two in the morning, and went to join her cousins, the Simeuses, in the forest, where they lay hidden in a deserted woodman's hut. She felt so sure of meeting them again that she showed not the slightest sign of joy, nor was there a trace of excitement or suspense in her manner; in short, she had contrived to efface the expression of the pleasure she had felt. She was quite impassive. Catherine, her foster-mother's pretty daughter, and Gothard were both in the secret, and followed their mistress' example. Catherine was nineteen years old. A girl of nineteen, like Gothard, is fanatical in her devotion; she will not utter a word with the knife at her throat. And as for Gothard, the rack would not have drawn a syllable from

him, after a breath of the scent that clung about the Countess' dress and hair.

While Marthe was gliding along like a shadow towards the gap of which Michu spoke when he warned her that danger was nigh at hand, the scene in the drawing-room at Cinq-Cygne was as peaceful as could be. The family were so far from suspecting that a storm was about to burst, that any one who had known their true position must have felt sorry for them. A fire was blazing on the great hearth beneath the pier-glass on the wall where the shepherdesses in paniers were dancing—such a fire as you only see in châteaux in a wooded country. And, by the fireside, in a great, square, gilded chair, covered with handsome silk damask, lay the young Countess, stretched at full length, as it were, in complete exhaustion. She had only come in at six o'clock, after riding as far as the Brie district, acting as scout till she saw her four nobles safely to the lair whence they were to make the final stage to Paris. Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre had almost finished dinner when she came in; so, famished as she was, she sat down to table in her mud-stained riding-habit and thick shoes, and when dinner was over she felt too tired to change her dress after all the day's fatigue. Her beautiful head, with its thick, bright curls, was resting on the back of her large, low chair; her feet were stretched out on a footstool, the splashes of mud on her shoes and habit were slowly drying in the warmth of the fire. Her hat and gloves and riding-whip lay on the console table, where she had thrown them down.

Now again she glanced up at the Boule clock between the two flowery branched candlesticks on the mantel-shelf, and wondered whether the conspirators were in bed by this time; then again she looked at the card-table drawn up to the fire; Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre were playing their game of boston with the curé of Cinq-Cygne and his sister.

Even if these personages had not been embedded in the course of the story their portraits would still have this merit, —they give an idea of one of the positions taken up by the

aristocracy after their defeat in 1793. From this point of view, a description of the inmates of the drawing-room at Cinq-Cygne, may be regarded as history in dressing-gown and slippers.

M. d'Hauteserre, a tall, spare, sanguine man, aged fifty-two, enjoyed robust health, and might have seemed capable of vigorous action if it had not been for the excessively simple expression of his big, china-blue eyes. An altogether disproportionate space between the mouth and nose in a countenance terminated by a long, peaked chin, gave to that gentleman an appearance of meekness perfectly in accordance with his character, and every little detail of his appearance bore out this impression. His gray hair, for instance, felted by the pressure of the hat that he wore almost the whole day long, looked something like a skull-cap, completing the outline of a pear-shaped head. His forehead, deeply wrinkled by an out-of-door life and continual anxiety, was vacant and expressionless. A hooked nose lent a certain amount of contrast to his face; but the only signs of force of character about him were to be found in the bushy eyebrows, still black as ever, and a high-colored complexion. Nor was this a misleading trait; the country gentleman, simple and mild-tempered though he was, held to his monarchical and religious creeds, and nothing would have induced him to change either the one or the other. If he had been arrested, the good, easy man would have made no resistance; he would not have fired on the representives of the authority; he would have trotted off quite meekly to the scaffold. He would have "emigrated" if his whole income had not consisted of an annuity of three thousand livres; but as it was, he submitted to the government *de facto,* without faltering in his attachment to the royal family. He wished to see the Bourbons once more upon the throne, but he would have refused to compromise himself by taking part in any attempt to bring them back again.

M. d'Hauteserre belonged to that section of the Royalist party which could never forget that it had been beaten and robbed, and thenceforth remained mute, frugal, rancorous,

and inert. Incapable alike of forswearing their principles or of making any sacrifice for them; perfectly ready to hail triumphant royalty; friends of priests and religion, they made up their minds to endure all the buffets of adverse fortune. These folk cannot be said to hold opinions, they are merely obdurate. Action is the *sine qua non* of a political party. M. d'Hauteserre, loyal but unintelligent, close-fisted as a peasant, yet lofty in his manners; bold in his wishes, yet discreet in words and actions, turning everything to account and quite ready to act as mayor of Cinq-Cygne, was an admirable specimen of his class. He was one of those honorable country gentlemen upon whose foreheads God has legibly written the word "mite"; these stayed in their manor-houses while the storms of the Revolution passed over their heads, emerging under the Restoration rich with hoarded savings and proud of their non-committal attachment, only to return to their estates in 1830.

M. d'Hauteserre's costume was the expressive husk of his character; his dress portrayed the man and the time in which he lived. He wore the nut-brown greatcoat, with a narrow collar, brought into fashion by the last Duke of Orleans after his return from England; a kind of compromise between the hideous popular costume and the graceful overcoats worn by the aristocracy. A velvet waistcoat with flowered stripes, something after the pattern familiarized by Robespierre and Saint-Just, was cut low enough to display the beginnings of a little plaited shirt frill. He had not discarded the old-fashioned small clothes, but they were made of coarse blue cloth fastened with steel buckles. Black silk stockings clung to the outlines of a pair of stag's legs, and his heavy shoes were kept in place by black cloth gaiters. His throat was enveloped by the multitudinous folds of a muslin frock, fastened by a gold buckle. The good man by no means aimed at expressing his political eclecticism in a costume in which peasant, revolutionary, and aristocrat were nicely blended; he had quite innocently bowed to circumstances.

Madame d'Hauteserre was a woman of forty, aged by

emotion; with a faded face that seemed always to be posed for a portrait; a lace cap adorned with upstanding satin bows contributed not a little to the solemnity of her air. She still wore powder in spite of her dress of a later period; a white kerchief, and a puce-colored silk gown with tight sleeves and a very full skirt, the last sober costume worn by Marie Antoinette. Her nose was pinched, her chin pointed, her face almost triangular, but she continued to put on the "suspicion" of rouge which lent brightness to the eyes that had shed so many tears. And she took snuff, omitting none of those little dainty precautions which the fine ladies of a previous age carried to the point of affectation; a host of small observances almost amounting to a rite, and all explained by a few words—Madame d'Hauteserre had pretty hands.

A Minorite abbé, Goujet by name, a friend of the late Abbé d'Hauteserre and tutor of the two Simeuses, had taken the cure of Cinq-Cygne for his retreat for the past two years, out of friendship for the d'Hauteserres and the young Countess. Mademoiselle Goujet, his sister, rich to the extent of seven hundred francs per annum, united her income to the curé's slender stipend, and kept house for her brother. Neither the church nor the parsonage had been sold because they were worth so little. So the Abbé Goujet lodged close by the château, for the parsonage garden lay on the other side of the park wall. Twice a week, he and his sister dined at the château, and every evening they came for a game of cards with the d'Hauteserres. Laurence did not know a single game.

The Abbé Goujet had a pleasant smile and a gentle, winning voice. His hair was white; his face, too, was white as an old woman's; an intelligent forehead and a pair of very keen eyes redeemed his almost doll-like countenance from insipidity. A well-made man of average height, he continued to wear the Frenchman's black coat, silver buckles at his knees and on his shoes, black silk stockings, and a black waistcoat with white bands, which gave him a certain grand air, while it took nothing from his dignity.

The abbé (he became Bishop of Troyes after the Restoration) had gained a considerable insight into the characters of young people in the course of his former life; he had divined Laurence's greatness; he fully appreciated her, and from the first treated the young girl with a respectful deference which contributed not a little to give her an independent position at Cinq-Cygne; the austere old lady and the good gentleman gave way to Laurence, instead of requiring obedience of her in the usual fashion. For the past six months the Abbé Goujet had been watching Laurence with that genius of observation peculiar to priests, the most perspicacious of all human beings. He did not know that this girl of three and twenty was thinking of dethroning Bonaparte, while her fragile fingers were twisting the loops of braid on her riding-habit; still he thought that some great purpose was fermenting in her mind.

Mademoiselle Goujet was a spinster whose portrait can be given in two words which will call up her image before the least imaginative mind. She was a woman of the big, gawky type. She knew she was ugly. She was the first to laugh at her ugliness, showing as she laughed a set of long teeth as yellow as her complexion and her bony hands. Mademoiselle Goujet was unfailingly cheerful and kind. She wore the well-known old-fashioned jacket, very full skirts, a pocket always full of keys, a cap trimmed with ribbons, and a false front. She looked like a woman of forty long before she reached that age, but she made up for it, as she said, by looking very much the same for twenty years together. Mademoiselle Goujet had a great veneration for the noblesse; she knew how to preserve her own dignity while rendering to noble birth its dues of respect and homage.

Their society was very welcome to Madame d'Hauteserre; unlike her husband, she had no out-of-door occupations, nor had she, like Laurence, a strong hatred to brace her to the endurance of a lonely existence. Life had grown in some sort bearable during the past six years. The Catholic Church had been re-established; there were religious duties to be

fulfilled (and these vibrate through life in the country as they never do anywhere else). The First Consul's conservative action reassured Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre; latterly they had been able to correspond with their sons, they had news of them in return. They need no longer tremble for their children, and begged them to make application to be erased from the List of *émigrés* and to come back to France. The Treasury had cleared off arrears and punctually continued to pay dividends quarter by quarter, so that the d'Hauteserres had rather more than their annuity of eight thousand francs. Old M. d'Hauteserre applauded his own sagacity and foresight. His savings for his ward, together with his own (some twenty thousand francs) had been invested in the Funds before the 18th Brumaire sent them up, as all the world knows, from twelve to eighteen francs.

For years Cinq-Cygne remained bare, empty, and desolate, M. d'Hauteserre having prudently determined to make no changes so long as the Revolutionary commotion lasted; but after the Peace of Amiens he went to Troyes to buy back some relics of the sack of the two mansions, from second-hand furniture dealers. Thanks to his pains, the drawing-room had been furnished. The six windows were adorned with handsome curtains of white silk damask with a green flower pattern, which once hung in the Hôtel Simeuse. The whole great room had been newly wainscoted with panels, each one framed in strips of beading, with masks by way of ornament at the corners, and the whole was painted in two shades of gray. Various subjects, in the gray cameo style in fashion under Louis XV., covered the frieze panels above the four doors; and the good man had found gilded console tables at Troyes, as well as a suite of furniture in green silk damask, a crystal chandelier, an inlaid card-table, and everything that might serve to restore Cinq-Cygne.

All the furniture of the château had been plundered in 1792, for the sack of the town houses was followed by a sack in the valley. Every time that M. d'Hauteserre went to

Troyes, he came back again with some few relics of ancient splendor; sometimes it was a handsome carpet, like the one which covered the drawing-room floor; sometimes it was a piece of plate, or old Dresden or Sèvres china. Six months ago he had ventured to dig up the Cinq-Cygne silver plate, which the cook had buried in a little house belonging to him, at the end of one of the straggling suburbs of Troyes.

This faithful servant, Durieu by name, and his wife, had always followed their young mistress' fortunes. Durieu was the man-of-all-work at the château, and his wife was housekeeper. Catherine's sister was kitchen-maid, and, under Durieu's training, was in a fair way to be an excellent cook. An old gardener and his wife, their son, a day laborer, and their daughter, the dairymaid, completed the staff of servants at the château. Six months since, La Durieu had secretly made a livery in the Cinq-Cygne colors for Gothard and the gardener's son, a piece of imprudence for which the old gentleman scolded her soundly; but she could not refuse herself the pleasure of having dinner served almost as it used to be in old times at the feast of St. Laurence, mademoiselle's patron saint. As for Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre and the Durieus, this slow, difficult progress of restoration was the joy of their lives, though Laurence used to smile at what she called childishness. But old M. d'Hauteserre took no less thought for substantial matters; he repaired buildings, reconstructed walls, put in a tree wherever there was a chance for it to grow, and made every inch of ground yield a return. Wherefore the valley of Cinq-Cygne regarded him as an oracle in matters pertaining to agriculture. He contrived to recover a hundred acres of land contested but not sold, and confounded with the common land by the commune. These he turned into artificial pastures for the cattle of the château, planting the meadows round with poplar trees, which had sprung up to admiration in six years. He purposed to buy back more land by and by, and to turn the buildings at the château to account on a second farm which he meant to manage himself.

So for the last two years, life had grown almost happy at Cinq-Cygne. M. d'Hauteserre was up and out at sunrise, looking after his men, for he was an employer of labor all through those times. He came in to breakfast, and afterwards made his rounds like any keeper on a farmer's nag; then returning to dinner, he finished off his day with boston. Every one at the château had his or her occupation; life in a convent was not more regular. Laurence was the only person who brought disturbance into it by her sudden journeys and absences from home; her "flights," as Madame d'Hauteserre called them. Nevertheless there were two parties at Cinq-Cygne, and causes of dissension.

In the first place, Durieu and his wife were jealous of Gothard and Catherine, who lived in greater intimacy with their young mistress, the idol of the household. Then the d'Hauteserres, supported by Mademoiselle Goujet and her brother, were anxious that their sons and the Simeuses likewise should return to share the happiness of this peaceful life, instead of living in discomfort abroad. Laurence denounced this compromise as infamous. She represented pure, implacable, militant Royalism. The four old people had no wish to see prospects of a happy existence any longer in jeopardy, nor to risk the loss of the little nook of land won back from the torrent deluge of the Revolution. They tried to convert Laurence to their truly prudent doctrines, for they saw that her influence counted for a good deal in the opposition made by the *émigrés* to all proposals for a return to France. The guardians, poor things, were frightened by their ward's superb disdain. They were afraid that she was meditating some rash deed, and they were not mistaken.

This difference of opinion in the family had flashed suddenly out after the explosion of the infernal machine in the Rue Saint Nicaise, the first Royalist attempt upon the life of the conqueror of Marengo, after his refusal to treat with the House of Bourbon. The d'Hauteserres thought it a fortunate thing that Bonaparte had escaped the danger, quite believing that Republicans were the authors of the outrage.

Laurence shed angry tears because the First Consul was saved. Her despair got the better of her habit of dissimulation; she accused God of betraying the son of St. Louis.

"Ah!" she cried, "*I* would have succeeded!" Then seeing the unutterable amazement in their faces, she turned to the Abbé Goujet. "Have we not a right to make use of all possible means against a usurper?"

"The Church has been impugned and severely blamed by the *philosophes*, my child, because in former times she held that it was justifiable to turn a usurper's weapons against himself; and in these days the Church owes so much to M. le Premier Consul that she cannot but protect and guarantee him from the consequences of a maxim, due moreover to the Jesuits."

"So the Church forsakes us!" she had answered, with a dark expression in her face.

From that day, whenever the four old people began to talk of submission to Providence, the young Countess left the room. And for some time past the curé (more adroit than the guardian) had ceased to discuss principles, and dwelt on the material advantages offered by the consular government; not so much with a view to converting the Countess, as to try to gain light upon her projects by watching the expression of her eyes at unguarded moments.

Laurence rode abroad more than ever. Gothard's frequent absences from home, Laurence's preoccupation, which in these last days rose to the surface and appeared on her face, a whole host of little things in short, which could not escape observation in the quiet, peaceful life at Cinq-Cygne, and certainly did not escape the anxious eyes of the d'Hauteserres, the Abbé Goujet, and the Durieus,—all this awakened the fears of Royalist resignation. But nothing seemed to come of it; the most perfect serenity prevailed in the political atmosphere for some days, and the little household in the château settled down into peace as before. Everybody thought that the Countess' passion for sport accounted for her wanderings.

It is not difficult to imagine the deep silence that prevailed

in the park and the courtyards and all about the château of Cinq-Cygne at nine o'clock at night. Everything and every one was so harmoniously colored, a deep peace brooded over the household, plenty had returned, and the good and prudent country gentleman had hopes of converting his ward to his theories of submission by a continuance of happy results. They were sitting over their boston, which game of cards was first invented in honor of the revolted American colonies; all the terms used in it recalled the struggle encouraged by Louis XVI., and the idea of independence became familiar to Frenchmen in this frivolous manner. But while the players scored their "independences" and "misères," they were watching Laurence.

Drowsiness soon overcame her; she fell asleep with an ironical smile hovering on her lips. Her last conscious thought had been of the party seated so quietly at the card-table, when two words from her, telling the d'Hauteserres that their sons had spent the previous night beneath their roof, would have struck the deepest consternation into all four of them. What girl of three and twenty would not have felt, as Laurence felt, proud to shape fate, and shared the faint stirrings of compassion which she felt for those so far beneath her?

"She is asleep," said the abbé. "I have never seen her look so tired."

"Durieu said that the mare was almost foundered," remarked Madame d'Hauteserre; "her gun had not been used. The cartridge chamber was clean; so she has not been out shooting."

"Fiddle-de-dee!" returned the curé, "that amounts to nothing."

"Pooh!" cried Mademoiselle Goujet, "when I was three and twenty and saw that I was doomed to be an old maid, I ran about and tired myself very much more. I can understand that the Countess may go about the country without any notion of shooting game. She has not set eyes on her cousins for twelve years; she is fond of them, very good;

in her place, now, if I were young and pretty, I should go straight into Germany. And perhaps she feels attracted to the frontier, poor, dear child."

"Mademoiselle Goujet, you are improper," said the curé smiling.

"Why, you are fidgeting over the goings and comings of a girl of three and twenty, and I explain it," said she.

"Her cousins will come back. She will be rich, and she will settle down in the end," old d'Hauteserre added.

"God send she may," cried old Madame d'Hauteserre, bringing out her gold snuff-box. (It had seen the light since Bonaparte became Consul for life.)

"There is news in the countryside," continued old d'Hauteserre, addressing the curé. "Malin came down to Gondreville yesterday evening."

"Malin?" exclaimed Laurence, awakened by the name, in spite of her profound slumber.

"Yes," said the curé, "but he is going back again to-night, and people are lost in conjecture over his sudden journey."

"That man is the evil genius of our two houses," said Laurence.

She had been dreaming about her cousins and the d'Hauteserres, and danger had threatened them in her dream. Her beautiful eyes grew wan as she stared before her and thought of the perils that they must encounter in Paris. She rose abruptly and went up to her room, the chamber of honor, with a dressing-room and an oratory situated in the tower nearest the forest.

Soon after Laurence left the drawing-room the dogs began to bark, somebody rang the bell at the gate, and Durieu came in consternation to announce, "Here comes the mayor! This is something fresh!"

The mayor, one Goulard, had once been one of the late Marquis de Simeuse's huntsmen. He used to come occasionally to Cinq-Cygne, and the d'Hauteserres considered it politic to treat him with a deference which the man valued highly. He had married a wealthy tradeswoman from

Troyes; his wife's property lay in the commune of Cinq-Cygne, and he himself had added to it by investing all his savings in the lands of a rich abbey. He and his wife lived like two rats in a cathedral, at the great Abbey of Val-despreux, about half a mile away, a great place almost as stately as Gondreville.

"Goulard, you have been a glutton!" Mademoiselle said laughing, when she first saw him at the château.

The mayor was warmly attached to the Revolution, and the Countess received him coldly; but he always felt bound by the ties of respect to the Cinq-Cygnes and the Simeuses, and for this reason he shut his eyes to much that went on there. He was blind to the portraits of Louis XVI., Marie Antoinette, the Children of France, Monsieur the Comte d'Artois, de Cazalès, and Charlotte Corday, which adorned the panels of the drawing-room; and deaf to wishes for the downfall of the Republic, or to scoffing at the expense of the Five Directors and other political arrangements of those days; and this he called "shutting his eyes." Like many other upstarts, he recovered his belief in the old families as soon as his fortune was made; he wanted to connect himself with them, and this position of affairs had just been exploited by the two personages whom Michu had so promptly recognized as spies. Corentin and Peyrade had made a survey of the district before they went to Gondreville.

The worthy described as the depositary of the best traditions of the old police, and Corentin, phœnix of spies, were in fact employed on a secret mission. Malin was not mistaken when he assigned a double part to that pair of artists in tragic farce. They were arms under the direction of a head which should perhaps be revealed before they are seen at their work.

When Bonaparte became First Consul, Fouché was the director-general of police. The Revolution had frankly and with reason made a special department of this branch of the service, but when Bonaparte came back after Marengo, he created a prefecture of police, installed Dubois as prefect,

summoned Fouché to the Council of State, and nominated Cochon (of the Convention, afterwards Comte de Lapparent) as Fouché's successor. Fouché regarded the office of Minister of Police as the most important of all in a government which took large views, and followed a definite political programme; he therefore took the change as a disgrace, or, at any rate, as a sign of distrust. Then came the affair of the infernal-machine and the plot which forms the subject of this history; and Napoleon recognized the fact that no man could be compared with Fouché in fitness for his office. Yet, later, the Emperor took alarm at the talents which Fouché displayed in his absence. After the Walcheren affair he made the Duke of Rovigo his Minister of Police, and appointed the Duke of Otranto to be Governor of the Illyrian Provinces, which practically meant that he sent him into exile.

Fouché's extraordinary genius, which struck a kind of dread into Napoleon, did not become apparent all at once. An obscure member of the Convention, one of the most remarkable and misjudged men of the time, he was formed in tempests. Under the Directory he reached an elevation whence profound natures can see the future by judging the past, and then quite suddenly, as a mediocre actor sometimes attains excellence with a flash of inspiration, he gave proofs of his skill during the rapid revolution of the 18th Brumaire. Slowly and silently this pale-faced creature—trained in monastic dissimulation, deep in the confidence of the Jacobin party, to which he belonged, and possessed of the secrets of the Royalists, to whom he went over at the last—had studied men and affairs and the interests at stake in the political arena. He divined Bonaparte's secret wishes and intentions, and gave him useful advice and valuable information. He had shown himself to be a man of resource, and useful to the government; and he was satisfied to do no more. He had no mind to make a complete revelation of himself; he meant to remain at the head of affairs; and Napoleon's uncertainty with regard to him gave him a free hand in politics. The Emperor's ingratitude, or, to be more accurate, his suspicion,

after the Walcheren affair, throws a new light on the character of the man; unfortunately for himself he was no *grand seigneur,* and he modeled his conduct upon that of the Prince de Talleyrand.

At this particular moment, not one of his former or present colleagues suspected the extent of his genius, a purely administrative, essentially departmental genius, accurate in all forecasts, and sagacious beyond belief. Any impartial historian must see, at this distance of time, that Napoleon's prodigious egoism was one of the many causes which brought about his downfall, a cruel expiation of his errors. In that suspicious sovereign, there was a certain jealousy of his new-born power, a jealousy which influenced all his actions at least as strongly as his private dislike of that group of able men (a valuable legacy left him by the Revolution) of whom he might have formed a cabinet to be the depositary of his thoughts. Others, beside Talleyrand and Fouché, aroused his suspicions. It is the misfortune of a usurper that he is bound to have two separate sets of enemies, those who gave him his crown, and those from whom he took it. Napoleon never wholly won sovereignty over the men who had been at first his superiors and afterwards his equals; nor, again, over sticklers for the rightful succession. Nobody felt that the oath of allegiance was binding.

Malin was a mediocrity; he was quite incapable of appreciating Fouché's dark genius; he did not distrust that quick comprehensive glance. So he singed himself like a moth in the candle flame. He went to Fouché to ask him in confidence to send some agents of police to Gondreville. He had hopes, he said, of throwing a light on the plot. Fouché was very careful not to startle his friend by putting any question to him, but he asked himself why Malin was going to Gondreville, and how it was that he did not communicate any information that he happened to have at once in Paris. The ex-oratorian, nurtured in dissimulation, and well aware that many members of the Convention were playing a double part, said to himself:

"How comes it that Malin knows something, when we as yet know next to nothing?"

Naturally, Fouché concluded that Malin was either implicated already or had designs of his own; but he was very careful to say nothing to the First Consul. He preferred not to ruin Malin, but to make a tool of him. This was Fouché's way. Most of the secrets that he discovered he kept to himself; he husbanded his power over people, and his power was even greater than Bonaparte's. This duplicity was one of Napoleon's grievances against his Minister.

Fouché knew that Malin had gained his estate at Gondreville by rascality; he knew, too, that Malin was obliged to keep on the watch for the Simeuses. The Simeuses were serving in the Army of Condé, and Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne was their cousin. They might very likely be somewhere in the neighborhood; possibly, also, they were involved in the plot; and, if this were so, the House of Condé, to which they were devoted, was certainly likewise involved. Altogether, M. de Talleyrand and Fouché held it important to gain light upon this very obscure corner of the conspiracy of 1803.

All these considerations Fouché saw with swift lucidity of comprehension. But the relation in which Malin and Talleyrand stood to one another obliged him to proceed with the utmost circumspection, and therefore he wished to have the most complete information as to the interior of the château of Gondreville. Corentin was wholly in Fouché's interest, just as M. de la Besnardière was attached to Talleyrand, Gentz to Metternich, Dundas to Pitt, Duroc to Napoleon, or Chavigny to Cardinal Richelieu. And Corentin was not merely Fouché's adviser, he was his familiar, his *âme damnée,* a Tristan in secret to a Louis XI. on a small scale. It was therefore material that Fouché should leave him in the police department, so as to have an eye and a hand there. People said that the young fellow was related in some way to Fouché; that he was one of those connections which are never acknowledged; for Corentin's services were always

lavishly rewarded. Corentin had made a friend of Peyrade, a pupil trained by the last of the lieutenants of police; still he had secrets even from Peyrade. Fouché's orders to Corentin had been to explore the château at Gondreville, to have the whole place mapped out in his memory, and to discover every possible hiding-place.

"We may perhaps be obliged to go there again," he had said, exactly as Napoleon told his lieutenants to make a careful survey of the field of Austerlitz, on which he expected to fall back.

It was Corentin's task, besides, to make a study of Malin's behavior. He was to ascertain the man's influence in the district and to notice the kind of men in his employ. Fouché felt quite certain that the Simeuses were somewhere in the neighborhood, and by playing the spy discreetly upon two officers in high favor with Condé, Peyrade and Corentin might gain invaluable light upon the ramifications of the plot beyond the Rhine. In any case, Corentin had money, authority, and men sufficient to surround Cinq-Cygne and to put the whole district between the Forest of Nodesme and Paris, under the surveillance of a spy system. Fouché's injunction, however, was to proceed with the greatest caution; they were not to make the domiciliary visit to Cinq-Cygne unless Malin himself gave them positive information. Finally, as a part of his instructions Fouché had given Corentin an account of the inexplicable personality of this Malin whom he had watched for three years. Corentin's thought was in his chief's mind at the same time.

"Malin knows about this conspiracy! . . . But who knows whether Fouché is not in it too?" he added within himself.

Corentin set out for Troyes before Malin started; came to an understanding with the commandant of gendarmerie; chose out the most intelligent of the men and a keen-witted captain for their leader. To this captain, Corentin gave orders to divide his men in four groups of a dozen, and to post them after nightfall at four different points in the

valley of Cinq-Cygne. These groups, on picket duty, were to be placed sufficiently far apart, for fear of giving the alarm, and gradually to close in till they formed a square about the château.

When Malin went out for his conference with Grévin, he gave Corentin an opportunity of fulfilling one part of his mission. And when the State Councillor came back from his interview in the park, he stated so positively that the Simeuses and the d'Hauteserres were actually in the neighborhood, that Corentin and Peyrade despatched their captain on his errand. Very luckily for the gentlemen in hiding, the gendarmes went through the forest, by way of the avenue, while Michu was plying Violette the spy with drink.

Malin had begun by telling Peyrade and Corentin about the trap from which he had just escaped. The two men from Paris, thereupon, related the incident of the rifle. Grévin sent Violette down to the lodge to see what was going on, and Corentin asked the notary to take his friend to spend the night under his roof in the little town of Arcis, for greater security. So it happened that while Michu was galloping across the forest to Cinq-Cygne, Peyrade and Corentin started out from Gondreville in a shabby basket-chaise drawn by a post-horse, and the man who drove them was the constable of gendarmerie from Arcis, one of the smartest men in the force; they had taken him on the particular recommendation of the commandant at Troyes.

"The best way of getting hold of them is to give them warning," Peyrade remarked to Corentin. "Then when they are scared, and try to save their papers or to fly, we will drop down on them like a thunderbolt. When the ring of gendarmes closes in about the château, we shall have them in a net. We shall get them all in that way."

"You might send the mayor to warn them," suggested the constable. "He is well disposed to them; he does not wish them harm. They will not suspect him."

Goulard was just going off to bed when Corentin stopped the chaise in a little wood, and went alone to tell him (in

confidence) that in another minute or two a government agent would require him, the mayor, to give his assistance to surround Cinq-Cygne, and to seize MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre at the château. If these gentlemen had disappeared, it must be ascertained whether they had spent the previous night there. Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's papers were to be searched, and probably the whole household would be put under arrest.

"Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne has interest with powerful persons, no doubt," continued Corentin, "for my secret instructions are to give her warning, and to do all that I can to save her, without committing myself. Once on the spot, I cannot act on my own responsibility; I am not alone. So hurry off to the château."

A visit from the mayor in the middle of the evening was the more surprising to the card-players because Goulard turned a perturbed countenance upon them.

"Where is the Countess?" he inquired.

"She has gone to bed," replied Madame d'Hauteserre.

The mayor lent an incredulous ear to the sounds above.

"What is the matter with you to-day, Goulard?" added Madame d'Hauteserre.

Goulard looked around upon their faces; each one expressed that complete innocence which may survive to any age. He sank into the utmost depths of astonishment. At sight of the quiet, harmless game of boston interrupted by his entrance, the suspicions of the Paris police grew utterly inconceivable.

Laurence, meanwhile, in her oratory, was kneeling in passionate prayer for the success of the plot! She prayed to God to give help and strength to Bonaparte's murderers! The fanatical zeal of a Harmodius, a Judith, a Jacques Clément, an Anckarstroem, a Charlotte Corday, a Limoëlan inspired a pure and noble maiden soul. Catherine was turning back the sheets, and Gothard was closing the shutters; so that when Marthe Michu flung a pebble up at the window he saw her at once.

"Mademoiselle!" he called, at sight of the stranger, "something has happened."

"Hush!" whispered Marthe, "come and speak to me."

Gothard was down and out in the garden in less time than a bird takes to fly from the tree-top to the ground.

"The gendarmerie will be round the château in another minute. . . . Go and saddle Mademoiselle's horse; don't make any noise, and come round through the gap in the fosse between the stables and the tower."

Laurence had followed Gothard, and stood a couple of paces away. Marthe quivered at sight of her.

"What is it?" Laurence asked, simply and without a sign of discomposure.

"The plot against the First Consul is discovered," Marthe answered, lowering her voice for the Countess' ear. "My husband is thinking how to save your cousins. He sent me to ask you to come to speak with him."

Laurence drew back a step or two and looked full at Marthe.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"Marthe Michu."

"I do not know what you want with me," Laurence returned coolly.

"But you are sending them to their death! for the Simeuses' sake, come!" cried Marthe, falling on her knees and holding out her hands entreatingly. "Are there any papers here, anything that can compromise you? My husband, up yonder in the forest, saw the rims of the gendarmes' caps and the barrels of their guns."

Gothard had begun by scrambling into the loft. He saw the glitter of laced uniforms, and heard the sound of horse hoofs through the stillness. He dropped down into the stable and saddled his mistress' horse; Catherine, at a word from him, tied the animal's feet in linen bandages.

"Where must I go?" asked Laurence, for the unmistakable ring of truth in the words and the expression of Marthe's face had struck her forcibly.

"Through the gap," said Marthe, hurrying her along.

"That noble man of mine is there. You shall learn what a Judas is worth."

Catherine ran into the drawing-room, caught up her mistress' gloves, hat and veil and riding-whip, and went out again. Catherine's sudden appearance was such an eloquent commentary on the mayor's words that Madame d'Hauteserre and the Abbé Goujet, exchanging glances, read a horrible thought in each other's eyes. "Good-bye to all our happy life! Laurence is plotting against the Government; her cousins and the two d'Hauteserres are lost, and it is her doing!"

"What do you mean?" asked Madame d'Hauteserre, turning to Goulard.

"Why, the château is surrounded; you are to receive a domiciliary visit. In short, if your sons are here in the house, help to save them and the Simeuses."

"*My sons!*" cried Madame d'Hauteserre in bewilderment.

"We have seen nobody here," began her husband.

"So much the better!" returned Goulard. "But I am too much attached to the family of Cinq-Cygne and the Simeuses to bear to see any misfortune happen to them. Mind what I say—if you have any compromising papers——"

"Papers?" repeated old M. d'Hauteserre.

"Yes; if there are any, burn them," returned the mayor. "I will go and keep these people in play."

Goulard had a mind to hold with the Royalist hare and to run with the Republican hounds. He went out, and the dogs began to bark furiously.

"It is too late," said the curé; "here they are. But who is going to tell the Countess? Where is she?"

"Catherine did not come in for her hat and gloves and riding-whip to make relics of them," remarked Mademoiselle Goujet. For some minutes Goulard tried to gain time by assuring the two police agents that the people in the château of Cinq-Cygne knew nothing whatever about the matter.

Peyrade laughed in his face.

"You don't know those folk," he said, and with that the pair

entered the house. At sight of their ominously bland countenances and the constable from Arcis and the gendarme appearing behind them, the four peaceable boston players felt the blood freeze in their veins. They stayed in their places, appalled by such a display of force. Half a score of gendarmes were stationed outside, for the sound of horses pawing the ground reached them across the lawn.

"Every one is here except Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne," remarked Corentin.

"But she is asleep, no doubt, in her own room," said M. d'Hauteserre.

"Ladies, come with me," said Corentin. He sprang across the antechamber and up the staircase, Madame d'Hauteserre and Mademoiselle Goujet following him. Corentin turned to the older lady. "Count upon me," he whispered. "I am one of your own side. I sent the mayor to you just now. Beware of my colleague, and trust me, I will save you all!"

"But what is it?" asked Mademoiselle Goujet.

"It is a matter of life and death! Do you not see that?" Corentin replied.

Madame d'Hauteserre fainted. To Mademoiselle Goujet's great surprise, and Corentin's no less great disappointment, Laurence's room was empty. Corentin felt sure that no creature could escape out of the park or the château into the valley. Every issue was guarded. So he ordered up a gendarme into every room, instituted a thorough search through the stables and outbuildings, and went down again to the drawing-room. By this time, Durieu, his wife, and the rest of the household had rushed thither in a state of terrific excitement. Peyrade's little blue eyes scrutinized every face, he was the one cool and unmoved spectator of the commotion.

Corentin came down alone, for Mademoiselle Goujet was attending to Madame d'Hauteserre. As he came in, they heard the sound of trampling horses and the wail of a child. The horses came through the gateway; and in the midst of the general anxiety and terror, the constable appeared, push-

ing Gothard, whose hands were tied, and Catherine, before the agents of police.

"Here are some prisoners," said he. "This little rascal was on horseback, and ran away."

"Idiot!" muttered Corentin, to the bewilderment of the constable. "Why didn't you let them alone? We might have found out something by following them."

Gothard had decided to burst into tears in an idiotic fashion. Catherine's expression of artless innocence set the old agent of police meditating profoundly. Lenoir's scholar compared the boy and girl; he had already made a close scrutiny of the whole party,—of the intelligent curé, who was toying with the counters on the table, of the bewildered servants, and the Durieus. M. d'Hauteserre, with his simple countenance, he took for a very deep old gentleman. He went across to Corentin and said in a low voice, "We have not to do with fools."

For answer Corentin glanced significantly at the card-table. "They were playing at boston," said he; "the mistress of the house was going to bed; they have been taken at unawares; we shall have them fast directly."

A gap always has its uses; there was never a gap yet without a reason for it. Now for the why and wherefore of the breach between the stables and the tower that they call Mademoiselle's Tower to this day. At one time, the surface water of the forest had been drained off by a long gully into the castle moat. When old M. d'Hauteserre came to Cinq-Cygne, he turned the gully into a roadway across the uncultivated lands of the château, simply for the purpose of planting out some hundred or so of walnut saplings which he found in a plantation. That was eleven years ago. The walnut trees since then had grown tolerably thick, almost overspreading the lane which lay six feet below the banks on either side, and ended in a coppice about thirty acres in extent,—a recent purchase.

When every one was at home at the château, the whole

household preferred the short cut by the breach in the fosse, to the longer way round over the bridge to the communal road that followed the park walls. It was the nearer way to the farm; so, quite unintentionally, the gap was enlarged on either side, and with the less scruple because a fosse is utterly useless in the nineteenth century, and M. d'Hauteserre often talked of turning it to account. Earth, gravel, and stones were continually pulled down from the sides, until at last the bottom of the ditch was filled in, and a sort of causeway raised high and dry above the water, which only covered it in very rainy weather. Still, in spite of this dilapidation, in which the Countess herself did her part, the place was so steep that it was no easy matter to take a horse up through the breach, while the climb to the communal road was more difficult still; but it would seem that in danger a horse makes his master's thought his own.

While the Countess was hesitating to follow Marthe and asking for explanations, Michu, watching from his knoll, saw the moving lines of gendarmes, comprehended the spies' plan, and gave all up for lost, as no one came. A picket of gendarmes followed the park walls, and spread themselves out like sentinels,—one man just so far from the next that he could see him and hear him call. Not the least thing, not the faintest rustle, could escape them. Michu, lying flat on his stomach, with his ear close to the ground, calculated the time that remained, Indian fashion, by the loudness of the sound.

"I have come too late!" he said to himself. "Violette shall pay for this. What a time he took to get drunk! What is to be done?"

He heard another picket pass through the iron gate. Apparently the men had come from the forest, for another band came to join them by way of the communal road.

"Five or six minutes still left," he thought. And at that moment the Countess appeared. Michu's strong hands caught her and dropped her into the shaded lane. "Go straight ahead! Show her the way to the place where my horse is

standing," he added, turning to his wife, "and don't forget that gendarmes have ears."

Danger stimulated Michu's imagination. At sight of Catherine with the hat and gloves and riding-whip, he resolved to outwit the gendarmes as he had outwitted Violette, especially as Gothard came up just then with the mare; the boy had forced her to climb the gap as if by magic.

"Bandages on the mare's hoofs! I could kiss you," he cried, hugging Gothard in his arms. He left the animal to follow her mistress, and took the hat and gloves and riding-whip.

"You have your wits about you, you will understand me," continued he. "Force your horse up into the road. Ride bare-backed, trail the gendarmes after you, and run for your life towards the farm. Just draw off all this picket in a body," he added, waving a hand in the direction Gothard was to take. Then he turned to Catherine.

"As for you, my girl, there are some more gendarmes coming down on us from Gondreville. Off with you in the opposite direction, and draw the picket away from the château into the forest. In fact, manage so that we shall have no trouble with them here in the hollow."

Catherine and the remarkable child, who was to give so many proofs of intelligence in the course of this affair, both executed this manœuvre with such skill, that a line of gendarmes on either side believed that their prey was escaping them.

It was impossible in the uncertain moonlight to make sure of the sex, dress, or number of the fugitives, so the whole picket was soon in hot pursuit on the strength of the fallacious axiom that "any one who runs away ought to be stopped." The folly of this course in the higher branches of the detective service had subsequently been pointed out to the constable by Corentin in forcible language; but Michu had reckoned rightly upon the gendarmes' instinct. He was able to reach the forest some seconds after the Countess. Marthe had led the way to the spot.

"Run back to the lodge," Michu said to his wife. "The forest is sure to be guarded by the Parisians; it is not safe to stay here. We shall want all our liberty, I have no doubt."

Michu untied his horse as he spoke, and asked the Countess to follow him.

"I shall go no further," said Laurence, "unless you give me some pledge of the interest that you take in me. After all, you are Michu——"

"Mademoiselle," he said gently, "two words will explain the part I am playing. I am the MM. de Simeuses' trustee, all unknown to them. I took my instructions from my lord, their late father, and their dear mother, my patroness. So I have played the part of rabid Jacobin, to serve my young masters; unluckily I began the game too late; my old master and mistress I could not save."

Michu's voice faltered.

"Since the young gentlemen fled, I have sent them the money they needed to live as befitted their rank."

"Through the firm of Breintmayer, at Strasbourg?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, Strasbourg correspondents of M. Girel of Troyes. M. Girel is a royalist, but to save his property he turned Jacobin as I did. That paper which your farmer picked up one evening coming out of Troyes, referred to this business; it might have got us both into trouble, and my life was not my own but theirs. Do you understand? I could not get possession of Gondreville. They would have wanted to know where I got so much money, and, situated as I was, they might as well have cut my throat. I preferred to wait and buy later on; but the scoundrel Marion was acting for that other scoundrel Malin. Gondreville shall go back to its owners all the same. That is my affair. Four hours ago, I had Malin at the end of my rifle; oh, he was past praying for! Lord! once he was dead, there would be a compulsory sale, and you could buy the place. If anything happened to me, my wife would have brought you a letter that would have given you the means. But that brigand was telling his crony Grévin (another of the scum of the earth) that the MM. de

Simeuse were plotting against the First Consul, that they were in the neighborhood, and that it would be better to betray them and be rid of them so as to own Gondreville in peace. Now, as I had just set eyes on two arrant spies, I took the charge out of my rifle, and lost no time over coming here. I thought that you ought to know where and how the young gentlemen could be warned. That is all."

"You are worthy to be a noble," said Laurence, holding out her hand. Michu made as if he would kneel to kiss it, but Laurence stopped him.

"Stand up, Michu," she said, and something in her tone and look made him as happy at that moment as he had been unhappy for twelve years past.

"You are rewarding me," he said, "as if I had done all that I have yet to do. Do you hear those gallows-purveyors? Come, let us talk somewhere else."

Michu took the mare by the bridle and helped the Countess to mount.

"Give your whole mind to holding on tight," he said, "to using the whip, and steering clear of the branches that will slash you across the face."

For half an hour he led her at full gallop; they turned and twisted and went round and about to cut off the trail across the glades, till they reached a point where he stopped.

"I have no idea where I am," said the Countess, looking about her, "though I know the forest as well as you do."

"We are right in the middle of it," he answered. "There are two gendarmes after us, but we are safe."

The picturesque spot to which the bailiff brought Laurence was to play such a momentous part in the lives of the principal characters in the story (Michu included), that it becomes the chronicler's duty to describe it. And not only so, the place became famous in the judicial calendar of the Empire, as shall be shown.

The Forest of Nodesme once belonged to the monastery of Notre Dame. That monastery, seized, sacked, and demolished, disappeared entirely; neither monks nor lands re-

mained. The coveted forest became a part of the lands of the counts of Champagne, who afterwards pledged it and allowed it to be sold. In the course of six hundred years, nature covered the ruins over with her luxuriant mantle of lusty green, hiding them so effectually that nothing but a tolerably low mound overshaded by tall forest trees marked the spot where one of the finest of old convents once had stood. A dense thicket surrounded the place, and since 1794 it had pleased Michu to plant thorny acacias among the bushes. A pool below the mound indicated a hidden spring which doubtless determined the site of the convent in former times. Nobody but the owner of the title-deeds of the Forest of Nodesme could have traced the etymology of a word eight centuries old, or discovered that there had been a monastery in the woods in days of yore.

Just as the first mutterings of the thunder of revolution were heard, a lawsuit obliged the Marquis de Simeuse to refer to his title-deeds. These particulars chanced to attract his attention, and he began a search for the site of the monastery. It is easy enough to imagine the thought he must have had in his mind. The head keeper, knowing the forest well, assisted his master in the quest; and it was Michu's woodcraft which discovered the spot. He saw that there were five principal roadways, some of them almost undistinguishable in the forest; and he noticed that they all converged at this point, near the mound beside the pool. In former times they must have led from the monastery to Troyes, to the valley of Arcis, the valley of Cinq-Cygne, and to Bar-sur-Aube. The Marquis meant to make excavations in the mound, but he could not employ natives of the district on the work, and the pressure of circumstances compelled him to give up the idea. But the idea that the mound contained hidden treasure or the foundations of the abbey, remained in Michu's mind, and he carried on the archæological investigations by himself. Just at the level of the pool, between two trees at the foot of the one bit of steep bank, he found that the ground rang hollow underfoot. Then one clear night he brought a pickaxe and worked

till he laid bare an opening into a cellar, and several stone steps.

The pool, only three feet deep at the most, was shaped like a spade, with the handle issuing from the mound. A spring apparently rose in the artificial rock of masonry, filtered away out of sight, and was lost in the vast forest. All the neglected wood paths, all the tracks of ancient roads and forest rides led to this marshy spot with its fringe of waterside trees, its ashes, willows, and alders. The water seemed to be stagnant, but it was always running under the broad-leaved weeds and cresses; for the whole green surface of the pool was scarcely distinguishable from its margin of thick, delicate grasses. So lonely was it that no animal save the wild creatures came to feed there. The mound was difficult of access; keepers and sportsmen were fully persuaded that nothing could exist below the marsh; so they never visited, searched, or sounded that part of the forest where the tallest timber grew under Michu's supervision till its turn should come to be cut down.

At the back of this cellar there was a clean, dry, and wholesome vaulted cell, built of freestone, something after the manner of that kind of conventual dungeon known as an *in pace*. The spring seemed to have been respected in the general demolition, for the cistern wall, built of brick and mortar such as the Romans used, was apparently of immense thickness; to which cause probably the wholesomeness of the place and the good condition of the steps were due.

Michu covered the mouth of the retreat with huge stones, and the better to keep the secret to himself, he made it a rule never to approach the place by way of the pool, but to climb the wooded mound and drop down from above.

When the two fugitives reached the spot the century-old trees that grew on the mound were tipped with bright silver by the moonlight; it played over the stately clusters among the glades that met about the spot, and the broad or narrow wedges of the woodland which ended sometimes in a clump, sometimes in a single tree. Your eyes were drawn irresistibly to

the glimpses of the distance down some curving path, by some black wall of leaves in shadow, or along a sublime, far-reaching vista of forest trees. The light, filtering down through the branches about the meeting of the ways, found the still water out of sight under the cresses and lily leaves, and lit a diamond spark here and there. The croaking of the frogs was the only sound that troubled the deep silence of this fair nook of forest, where the wild scents stirred thoughts of freedom in the soul.

"Are we really safe?" the Countess asked Michu.

"Yes, mademoiselle. But we have each of us something to do. Tie up the horses to the trees on the top of the bank, and muzzle them both," he added, holding out his neck handkerchief; "they are intelligent creatures; they will understand and keep quiet. When that is done jump down off the bank to the water's edge; take care not to catch your habit against anything, and you will find me below."

While the Countess hid the horses, and tied them up, and fastened the handkerchiefs over their nostrils, Michu cleared away the stones from the opening into the cellar. Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne thought that she knew the forest thoroughly; she was amazed to the last degree to find herself under the vaulted roof. Michu put back the stones as skilfully as any mason. He had scarcely finished before the trampling of horse hoofs and the voices of the gendarmes rang through the still night air; nevertheless, he struck a light with much composure, kindled a bit of pine torch, led the way into the *in pace,* where he found an end of candle left behind after an exploring expedition. The iron door he himself had put into repair; though eaten through with rust in several places, it was nearly an inch thick and was bolted on the outside. An iron ring still hung from the wall, above the stone bench on which the Countess de Cinq-Cygne sank down, exhausted.

"We have a parlor to talk in," said Michu. "The gendarmes may go round and about as much as they like; if the worst comes to the worst, they will only take the horses."

"Take our horses," repeated Laurence de Cinq-Cygne. "I

they do, it might be the death of my cousins and the d'Hauteserres! . . . Let us see now, what do you know?"

Michu repeated the scrap of Malin's conversation with Grévin.

"They are on their way to Paris now! They are to reach Paris this morning!" said the Countess when he ended.

"It is all over with them!" exclaimed Michu. "There will be men at the barriers to watch every one who comes in or out of Paris, you may be sure. It is in every way to Malin's interest to allow my masters to compromise themselves hopelessly, so as to get rid of them."

"And I know nothing of the general scheme!" cried Laurence. "How can I send warning to Georges and Rivière and Moreau? Where are they? In short, let us think simply of my cousins and the d'Hauteserres, and overtake them, cost what it may."

"Signaled messages travel faster than the best horse," said Michu, "and of all the nobles deep in this plot, your cousins will be most thoroughly hunted down. If I can overtake them, they must be hidden here; we will keep them here till the affair is over. Their poor father perhaps had a vision of this when he set me on the track of the hiding-place; he had a presentiment that his sons would fly to it in danger."

"My mare was bred in the Comte d'Artois' stables. Her sire was his best English thoroughbred, but I have ridden her between eighty and ninety miles to-day; she would drop down dead on the road."

"I have a good horse," replied Michu. "If you have ridden between eighty and ninety miles, I should not have much more than forty to ride."

"Fifty-five," said she; "they were to be on their way by five o'clock. You will find them above Lagny at Coupvrai. They are to leave Coupvrai at dawn, disguised as boatsmen; they mean to enter Paris by boat. Here is the one token that they will believe," she continued, giving the broken half of her mother's wedding-ring. "I gave them the other half. The keeper at Coupvrai is the father of one of the men they have

with them; he found them a hiding-place in a charcoal-burner's hut in the woods. There are eight in all. My cousins have four men with them beside the MM. de Hauteserre."

"Nobody will run after the men, mademoiselle; let us look after the MM. de Simeuse, and leave the rest to do as they like about getting away. Is it not enough to give a call of 'Heads, oh'?"

"Leave the d'Hauteserres? Never!" she said. "They must all escape or all die together."

"Little country squires," objected Michu.

"They are only squires, I know," she said, "but they are connected with the Cinq-Cygnes and the Simeuses. So bring back my cousins and the d'Hauteserres, and take counsel with them as to the best way of reaching the forest here."

"There are the gendarmes! Do you hear? They are having a consultation."

"After all, you have been lucky twice already to-night. Go, bring them back, and hide them here in this hole. They will be quite safe. And I can be of no use whatever to you," she cried passionately. "I should be a beacon to give light to their enemies. The police will never think that they could come back to the forest when they see me stay quietly at home. And now the whole question is this," she continued, "how to find five good horses that will bring them from Lagny to our forest in six hours; five horses to be left dead in a thicket."

"And money?" asked Michu. He had been thinking intently as he listened.

"I gave my cousins a hundred louis, just now."

"I will answer for their lives," Michu exclaimed. "When once they are hidden you must give up any attempt to see them. My wife or my boy will take food to them twice a week. But I cannot answer for my own life; so I must tell you, mademoiselle, in case anything should happen, that in the cross-beam in the garret roof there is a hole bored by an auger, and stopped with a wooden plug. Inside there is a

plan of a bit of the forest. All the trees marked with a red dot on the plan, bear a black mark on them on the ground, and each one of those trees is a sign-post. Under the third old oak from each of the sign-post trees, two feet away from the trunk, and seven feet underground, there lies a tin canister containing a hundred thousand francs in gold. These eleven trees, for there are only eleven of them, are all the fortune left to the Simeuses now that Gondreville has been taken from them."

"It will take a century for the noblesse to recover from the blows dealt to them," Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne said slowly.

"Is there a password?" Michu asked.

"*France* and *Charles* for the men, and *Laurence* and *Louis* for the d'Hauteserres and Simeuses. O, God! to have seen them again for the first time after eleven years, and to know that they are in danger of death to-day, and what a death! Michu," she said, with a melancholy expression in her face, "be as careful during these next fifteen hours as you have been great and devoted all through the twelve years. If anything should happen to my cousins, I should die. No, not until I had killed Bonaparte," she added.

"There will be two of us for that," he said, "on the day when all is lost."

Laurence grasped Michu's rough hand in hers, and shook it in the English fashion. Michu looked at his watch. It was midnight.

"Let us get out at all costs," he said. "The gendarme that tries to stop me had better look out! And you, Madame la Comtesse, would it not be better for you to go back to the château at full gallop? They are there; keep them in play."

Michu unstopped the entrance, and heard nothing; he flung himself flat on the ground to listen, and then rose suddenly to his feet.

"They are on the outskirts of the forest near Troyes," he said; "I will give them leg bail."

He helped the Countess to climb out, replaced the heap of

stones. When he had finished, he heard Laurence's sweet voice calling to him; she wished to see him mount first. There were tears in the rough keeper's eyes as he exchanged a last glance with his young mistress, but Laurence was dry eyed.

"Let us keep them in play; he is right," she said to herself when the last sounds had died away. And she set out at a gallop for Cinq-Cygne.

When Madame d'Hauteserre knew that her sons' lives were in danger, the very violence of the anguish which stunned her brought her back to her senses and gave her strength. She could not believe that the Revolution was over; she had had experience of the summary justice dealt in times past; and a dreadful curiosity drew her down to the salon. The sight that met her eyes was in truth worthy of a painter of genre.

The curé was still sitting at the card-table, playing mechanically with the counters, while he kept a furtive watch on Peyrade and Corentin, who stood in the chimney corner talking together with lowered voices. Several times Corentin's keen eyes had happened to meet the curé's no less keen glances, but both of them promptly looked away, much as two equally matched fencers might fall back on guard after crossing swords.

Old d'Hauteserre, planted like a heron on his two feet, stood beside Goulard, the big and burly miser, whose attitude assumed in his first bewilderment was still unchanged. As for the mayor, though he dressed like a master, he always looked like a servant. Both men stared stupidly at the gendarmes, on either side of Gothard. The boy was still crying; his hands had been tied in such a rigorous fashion that they were purple and swollen. Catherine maintained her position; she was quite simple and artless and quite inscrutable. The constable, who according to Corentin had made a silly blunder by arresting these good little souls, was in two minds whether he ought to stay or go, so he stood absorbed in thought in the middle of the room, with his hand

on his sabre hilt and his eyes on the men from Paris. The bewildered Durieus and the group of servants made an admirable picture of anxiety. If it had not been for Gothard's sobbing you could have heard a pin drop.

All faces were turned towards the door when it opened and the mother appeared, white and terror-stricken, almost carried by Mademoiselle Goujet, whose eyes were red with weeping. The two agents of police hoped and the rest of the party feared to see Laurence enter with them. The spontaneous movement of the family, the servants included, might have been caused by some mechanical contrivance that sets a row of wooden puppets making one single gesture or blinking their eyes with one accord.

Madame d'Hauteserre made three hasty paces towards Corentin and cried out, in a broken but excited voice:

"For pity's sake, monsieur, of what are my sons accused? And do you think that they can be here?"

The curé, watching the old lady, lowered his eyes. "She will make a mess of it," he seemed to say to himself.

"My duty and the mission which I am fulfilling will not permit me to tell you that," replied Corentin, with satirical urbanity.

The young fop's odious affability made his refusal even more hopelessly emphatic; the old mother seemed to be turned to stone. She sank down into an easy-chair beside the Abbé Goujet, clasped her hands, and put up a prayer.

"Where did you find that cry-baby?" inquired Corentin, indicating Laurence's little squire to the constable.

"On the road to the farm along by the park walls; the rogue was making for the wood at Closeaux."

"And the girl?"

"She? It was Olivier that nabbed her."

"Where was she going?"

"Towards Gondreville."

"One going one way, and the other, another."

"Yes," said the gendarme.

"He is the Citoyenne Cinq-Cygne's page, and the girl is her maid, I think," said Corentin, addressing the mayor.

"Yes," answered Goulard.

Corentin and Peyrade held a brief, whispered conference on this, and the latter went out with the constable. The Arcis constable came in, and spoke to Corentin in a low voice.

"I know the premises well," he said. "I have made a thorough search through the outbuildings; there is nobody there unless the young fellows are buried underground. We have sounded all the walls and floors with our gun-stocks."

Peyrade came in, beckoned Corentin out of the room, took him to see the gap in the fosse, and pointed out the hollow way beyond.

"We have found out the dodge," said he.

"And I'll tell you what it was," said Corentin. "That little jackanapes and the girl put those stupid idiots of gendarmes on the wrong scent, so that the game got clear away."

"We shall not know how things really are before daylight," returned Peyrade. "The lane is damp. I have posted a couple of gendarmes at top and bottom, to stop the way; and as soon as we can see, we will find out who it was that went that way by the footprints."

"There is the mark of a horseshoe here," said Corentin. "Let us go round to the stables."

"How many horses are there here?" demanded Peyrade, when they returned to the salon.

"Come, come, master mayor, you know; answer!" cried Corentin, seeing that that functionary hesitated.

"Why, there is the Countess' mare, there is Gothard's horse, and M. d'Hauteserre's——"

"We only saw one in the stable," remarked Peyrade.

"Mademoiselle has gone out," said Durieu.

"Does your ward often go out at night in this way?" asked the dissolute Peyrade.

"Very frequently," the old gentleman answered simply, "as M. le Maire can testify."

"She has her crotchets, as all the world knows," put in Catherine. "She looked out at the sky before she went to bed; she saw your bayonets shining in the distance, I expect,

and that puzzled her. She told me when she went out that she wanted to know if there was another new revolution going on."

"When did she go out?" asked Peyrade.

"When she saw your guns."

"And which way did she go?"

"I do not know."

"And the other horse?" suggested Corentin.

"The g-g-gendarmes t-t-took him awa-wa-way from me," sobbed little Gothard.

"Then where were you going?" asked a gendarme.

"I wa-wa-was g-going after m-my mistress to the f-f-f-farm!"

The gendarme looked up as if he expected an order; but this kind of talk was so natural yet so artful, so profoundly innocent yet so shrewd, that again the men from Paris looked at one another as if to repeat Peyrade's dictum, "These are no fools."

The master of the house apparently had not wit enough to understand a gibe. The mayor was plainly a dolt. The mother, driven out of her maternal wits, was putting hopelessly silly questions to agents of police. All these people had really been surprised in their sleep. Corentin with all these little facts before him, weighed the characters of these divers personages, and at once came to the conclusion that his one real antagonist was Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne.

The detective, however clever he may be, labors under a great many disadvantages. Not only is he obliged to find out all that the conspirator knows already, but he is further bound to invent hypotheses by the hundred until he chances upon the right one. A conspirator is always thinking of his safety, while the detective is only on the alert at certain times. If it were not for traitors conspiracy would be the easiest thing in the world. A conspirator has more ingenuity in his single head than the whole body of detectives with all their immense resources in action. Corentin and Peyrade felt that they were pulled up, mentally speaking. They had

been driven, as it were, to pick a lock instead of finding an open door, and now discovered that several persons on the other side were silently leaning all their weight against it. Corentin and Peyrade saw that some one had guessed their plans and outwitted them; but who this was they did not know.

"If the MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre spent the night here," the Arcis constable said in a low voice, "I will be bound that they either slept in the beds belonging to their father and mother, Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and the servants, or else they tramped up and down in the park all night, for there is not the slightest sign to show that they have been here."

"Then who can have given them warning?" Corentin asked turning to Peyrade. "Nobody knows anything yet, except the First Consul and Fouché, the Prefect of Police, the Ministers, and Malin."

"We will leave some *sheep* in the neighborhood," whispered Peyrade.

"And that so much the better because your sheep will be in Champagne,"* said the curé; he could not help smiling when he heard that word *sheep,* and guessed all that was meant by it.

"Dear me," thought Corentin, smiling back at the curé, "there is one intelligent man here. I may arrive at an understanding with him; I will have a try."

But the mayor meant at all events to give some proof of his zeal for the First Consul; he addressed himself to Fouché's agents.

"Gentlemen——"

"Say citizens; the Republic is still in existence," suggested Corentin, with a satirical smile at the curé.

"Citizens," began the mayor, "just as I came into this room and before I could open my mouth, Catherine came flying in for her mistress' hat and gloves and riding-whip."

*An allusion to the saying, *Quatre-vingt-dix-neuf moutons et un Champenois font cent bêtes.*

For the French word *mouton* in its sense of police spy, no English equivalent exists —Tr.

A low murmur of disgust came from the depths of every chest save Gothard's. All eyes, save the eyes of the police agents, flashed fire and threatenings at Goulard the informer.

"Good Citizen Mayor," said Peyrade, "we see through this perfectly well. Somebody gave the Citizeness Cinq-Cygne a very timely warning," he added, eyeing Corentin with evident distrust.

"Constable, put handcuffs on the little chap," said Corentin, "and shut him up alone. Lock up this little girl, too," he added, pointing to Catherine.—"You will superintend the search of the papers, now," he continued, turning to Peyrade. He lowered his voice to say a few words, and then added aloud, "Search through them all, spare nothing.—M. l'Abbé," he continued, "I have an important communication to make." He led the way into the garden. "M. l'Abbé, you seem to me to have all the wit of a bishop, and—nobody can overhear us—you will understand me, my one hope is in you. Here are two families brought by some foolish blunder to the brink of a precipice from which no one comes back if he once falls over. The MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre have been betrayed by one of the vile informers insinuated into every plot by the Government, so as to make sure of the methods employed, the people involved in it, and their object. Do not confuse me with the wretch, my companion; he is a mere detective, while I have the last word of the consular cabinet to which I am very honorably attached. It is not desired that the MM. de Simeuse should be ruined; Malin might like to see them shot, but the First Consul wishes to stop them on the brink of the precipice (if they are here, that is, and if they have no criminal designs), for he has a liking for a good soldier. My fellow agent has all the power; I, in appearance, am nobody, but I know how the land lies. Malin has given him a hint, has promised to use his influence, no doubt, to get him a place and money as well, very likely, if he can find the two Simeuses and give them up. The First Consul is a really great man; he has no sympathy with covetousness and greed.

"I have not the least wish to know whether the young men are here," continued Corentin, in reply to a gesture from the curé, "but there is only one way of saving them. You know the law of 6th of Floréal, year X.? It offers an amnesty to all *émigrés* still resident abroad, on condition that they return before the 1st Vendémaire of the year XI., which is to say, before the September of last year. But as the MM. de Simeuse and the MM. d'Hauteserre likewise have held commands in the Army of Condé, they are among the exceptions made by that same law. So their presence in France is a criminal offence; it will be taken, under the circumstances, as a sufficient proof of their complicity in a detestable plot. The First Consul has felt the weak point of the exception made by the law of the 6th Floréal; he sees that it makes irreconcilable enemies for his Government; he wishes it to be made known to the MM. de Simeuse, that no steps will be taken against them, if they address a petition to the proper quarter, stating that they have come back to France with a view to making their submission to the laws, and promising to take the oath to the Constitution. You can understand that this document must be in his hands before they are arrested; it should be dated a few days back; I can be the bearer. . . .

"I do not ask you where the young men are," he went on, as the curé shook his head again. "Unfortunately we are only too sure to find them. The forest is patrolled, the gates of Paris are watched, so is the frontier. Attend carefully to this that I am about to say! If the gentlemen are anywhere between the forest and Paris, they will be taken. If they are at Paris, they will be found there. If they turn back, the unfortunates will be arrested. The First Consul is well disposed towards *ci-devants,* and cannot bear Republicans; and this is quite natural. If he wants a throne he is bound to murder liberty first. This between ourselves. Now, see here! I will wait till to-morrow; I will be blind; but be on your guard with the agent. That damned Provençal is the devil's own lackey; he has Fouché's instructions just as I have mine from the First Consul."

"If the MM. de Simeuse are here," said the curé, "I would give ten pints of my blood and an arm to save them; but, if Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne is in their confidence, not the slightest word has escaped her, and she has not done me the honor to consult me. I swear it by my salvation. At this moment I am profoundly glad that she has kept her own counsel, always supposing that she had any counsel to keep. We were playing a game of boston to-night, as usual; the house was perfectly quiet until half-past ten; we neither saw nor heard anything. A child cannot come into this lonely valley but everybody sees and knows it, and for the last fortnight not a single stranger has been here. Now the MM. d'Hauteserre and de Simeuse make a party of four by themselves. The old gentleman and his wife have submitted to the Government; they have made every imaginable effort to bring their sons home; they wrote to them only yesterday. So, upon my soul and conscience, it took your descent upon us here to shake my firm belief that they are in Germany. Between ourselves, the young Countess is the only person in the house who fails to do justice to the eminent merits of M. le Premier Consul."

"Sly dog!" thought Corentin. Aloud he said, "If the young men are taken and shot, it will only be what they deserve. I wash my hands of it now."

He had walked with the abbé to an open space; the moon was shining down full upon them, and as he uttered those fatal words, he looked up sharply, full in his companion's face. The abbé was deeply distressed; but he seemed both surprised and wholly ignorant.

"Just remember, M. l'Abbé," Corentin went on, "that they are doubly criminal in the eyes of subordinates, because they have a right to Gondreville. In fact, I want them to pray to Providence, and not to the saints."

"Then there is a plot?" the curé asked naïvely.

"A base, hateful, cowardly plot, so contrary to the generous spirit of the nation that it will meet with reprobation on all sides," replied Corentin.

"Oh, well! Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne is incapable of baseness," exclaimed the curé.

"M. l'Abbé," returned Corentin, "look here. We have (this is still between you and me), we have unmistakable proof of her complicity, but not enough as yet to serve as evidence in a court of law. She takes flight as soon as we come. . . . And yet, I had sent the mayor to you."

"Yes, but you followed rather close upon the mayor's heels for a man that had it so much on his mind to save them," remarked the abbé.

The two men looked one another in the eyes. There was no more to be said. Both were deeply learned anatomists of human thought; a simple inflexion of the voice, an expression, a word was enough; they could guess the kind of man with whom they had to do, just as a savage knows his enemies by tokens invisible to European eyes.

"I thought I should get something out of him," thought Corentin, "and he has found me out."

"Oh, the scoundrel!" the curé said to himself.

The old church clock struck twelve as Corentin and the curé came back to the drawing-room. There was a sound as of opening and shutting chamber doors and cupboards. The gendarmes were pulling the beds to pieces. Peyrade, with a spy's quick intelligence, was ferreting and probing everywhere. The faithful servants of the family stood motionless as before, half terrified, half indignant at this raid. M. d'Hauteserre exchanged compassionate glances with his wife and Mademoiselle Goujet. A dreadful curiosity kept every one on the alert. Just then Peyrade came down with a box in his hand. It was a small, carved sandalwood box, that the Admiral de Simeuse must have brought from China,—a pretty, flat box, the size and shape of a quarto volume.

Peyrade beckoned Corentin to the window.

"I have it!" he said. "That Michu who could pay Marion a hundred thousand francs in gold for Gondreville, and wanted to kill Malin just now, must be the Simeuses' man. He threatened Marion and stalked Malin from the same

motive. He seemed to me to be capable of carrying ideas in his head; he has only one idea; he got to know how matters are, and he must have come to give the alarm here."

"Yes, Malin would be talking about the plot with his friend the notary," said Corentin, following out his colleague's reasoning; "and Michu being in ambush, no doubt would hear the Simeuses' name mentioned. In short, Michu only brought himself to postpone his chance of a shot at him, to prevent a calamity which seemed to him to be even greater than the loss of Gondreville."

"He saw quite well what we are," remarked Peyrade. "And it seemed to me, at the time, that that peasant's intelligence bordered on the marvelous."

"Oh! this proves that he was on his guard," replied Corentin. "But, after all, old man, we mustn't run away with the wrong idea. Treachery stinks prodigiously, and primitive folk smell it afar off."

"So much the better for us," rejoined the Provençal. Corentin called to a gendarme.

"Send in the Arcis constable," he said, adding to Peyrade, "Let us send down to the lodge."

"Violette is there; his ears are in our interest."

"We set out before we heard from him, though," said Corentin. "We ought to have brought Sabatier. Two of us are not enough."

When the gendarme came in, Corentin edged him in between himself and Peyrade.

"Constable," he said, "don't let them take a rise out of you, as they did just now out of the constable from Troyes. It looks to us as if Michu was in this affair. Go down to the lodge, take a look round, and report."

"One of my men heard horses in the forest, when they made prisoners of the lad and girl; and I have four stout fellows at the heels of those that might be trying to hide there," said the constable. He went out, set off at a gallop down the paved way across the lawn, and very soon the sounds grew faint in the distance.

"Come; they are either going towards Paris, or on their way back to Germany," said Corentin to himself. He sat down, took a note-book from the pocket of his spencer, wrote out two orders in pencil, sealed them, and beckoned to a gendarme.

"Ride off to Troyes full speed, wake up the prefect, and tell him to set the semaphore at work as soon as there is light enough."

The gendarme galloped off with the message. The meaning of this proceeding and Corentin's intentions were both so plain that the whole household felt something clutch tightly at their hearts; and yet the uneasiness was in some sort an added pang in their anguish, for their eyes were all fixed upon the precious casket. While the two agents spoke together, they furtively read the language of those blazing eyes; and their unfeeling hearts were moved to a sort of cold anger; they enjoyed the consternation about them.

The sensations of the sportman and the detective are the same; but while the one exerts all the powers of body and mind to kill a hare, a partridge, or a buck, the concern of the other is to save a government or a prince, and to earn a large reward. And this sport, in which man is the game, is superior to all other sport by the whole distance that separates man from the brute. A spy, moreover, is fain to magnify his part by the greatness and importance of the interests at stake. A man has no need to meddle in such business to realize that there is as much passionate interest thrown into it as ever the hunter can put into the chase. As the two detectives gained a glimmering of the truth, their eagerness grew warmer, but their faces and eyes were indifferent and composed; their suspicions, thoughts, and plan of action were impenetrable as ever. Yet for any one who could have watched these two sleuth-hounds at their work, who could have seen the way in which they tracked down unknown and concealed facts, and have understood the swift, canine instinct which led them to find the truth after a rapid survey of probabilities, there was something, I say, in all this to make one shudder.

How and why had these men of genius fallen so low, when they might have been so high? What flaw, what defect, what passion was it that had so debased them? Is a man a detective, as others are thinkers, writers, statesmen, painters, commanders on the battle-field, on condition that he shall do nothing but play the spy, just as other men do nothing but speak, write books, govern, paint, or fight, all their lives long? At the château there was but one wish in the hearts of the household,—"Will not thunder fall upon these wretches?" Every creature thirsted for revenge. But for the presence of the gendarmes there would have been an outbreak.

"Nobody has the key of the box," suggested the cynical Peyrade, giving an interrogative force to his remark by turning his great red face upon the company. He noticed as he did so, not without some inward quaking, that there were no gendarmes left in the room. Corentin and he were alone.

Corentin drew a small dagger from his pocket and proceeded to force it under the lid of the box. Even as he did so, they heard the sound of a horse galloping first on the road, afterwards on the paved way across the lawn; it was the terrible sound of a horse at the last gasp, succeeded by the far more dreadful moan, as the animal fell in a heap at the foot of the central turret.

The rustle of a riding-habit was followed by the appearance of Laurence herself, and in a moment the servants stood aside to right and left to allow her to pass. If a thunderbolt had fallen in their midst there could not have been more commotion. Quickly as she had ridden, she had had time to feel the pain that the discovery of the conspiracy must inevitably cause her. All her hopes were wrecked. She had galloped across the ruins of them, thinking all the while that there was nothing for it now but submission to the consular government; and if she had not quelled fatigue and exhaustion with the thought of the four nobles in peril of their lives she would have sunk fainting to the ground. She had all but killed her mare to come back to stand between her cousins and death.

At the sight of the heroic girl with the veil put back from her white, drawn face, and her riding-whip in her hand, every one knew by an almost imperceptible twitch of Corentin's sour, troubled countenance that now the real antagonists were face to face. A dreadful duel was about to begin.

The Countess saw Corentin with the box in his hands; raising her riding-whip she sprang at him so quickly and slashed him so sharply over the hands that the casket dropped to the ground. She snatched it up, flung it into the fire, and stood with her back to the hearth in a defiant attitude before the agents of police could recover from their surprise. Scorn blazed in Laurence's eyes; her white forehead and disdainful lips expressed more of insult than even her autocrat's action as she spurned Corentin for a venomous reptile. The chivalrous instinct was roused in old d'Hauteserre; all the blood rushed into his face; he wished that he had his sword at his side. The servants at first thrilled with joy; the vengeance so long invoked had fallen like a thunderbolt on one of these men; but a hideous fear soon thrust the joy down into the depths of their souls. They could still hear the gendarmes coming and going in the attics overhead.

The *spy*,—for all distinctions among agents of police are confounded and labeled with one vigorous epithet by a public that has never cared to find separate names to suit the various practitioners of a leech-craft indispensable to governments,—the spy has something about him that is magnificent and curious; he never resents anything. His is the Christian humility of the priest; his eyes are used to bear scorn; he raises, as it were, a barrier between himself and the multitude of fools that do not understand him. Insults he meets with brows of brass; he moves to his goal like some creature encased in a shell that nothing short of a cannon-ball can pierce; and, like his prototype of the carapace, he is the more furious when wounded because he believed himself secure in his armor. For Corentin that slash across the fingers, quite apart from the pain, was like the cannon-ball crashing through the carapace; the gesture, fraught with the loathing of a noble and heroic

girl, humiliated him not merely in the eyes of the onlookers, but even in his own.

Peyrade, the Provençal, sprang towards her. Laurence spurned him, but he caught her by the foot and forced her in that undignified fashion back into the low chair where she had lain asleep only a few hours ago. It was a bit of burlesque in the midst of terror, that touch of incongruity which is seldom wanting in human life. Peyrade scorched his hand as he snatched the box from the fire, but he took possession of the thing, dropped it on the floor and sat down upon it. The little events followed in swift succession, without a word. Corentin, recovered from the smarting sensation of the blow, held Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne down by the wrists.

"Do not oblige me to use force to you, fair citoyenne," he remarked, with withering courtesy.

Peyrade, sitting on his prize, had stifled out the flames.

"Here, men!" he called, still squatting in his odd position.

"Will you promise to behave yourself?" said Corentin, insolently addressing Laurence while he put up his dagger. He did not make the mistake of threatening her.

"The secrets in the box do not concern the Government," said she, with a touch of melancholy in her face and tone. "When you have read those letters, vile as you are, you will feel ashamed to have read them. . . . But have you any sense of shame still left?" she added after a pause.

The curé glanced at Laurence. "For God's sake, calm yourself!" he seemed to say.

Peyrade got up from the floor. The bottom of the box had been almost burnt out on the coals; it had left a scorched mark on the carpet. The lid was almost reduced to charcoal by this time; the sides gave way; and this grotesque Scævola, who had just sacrificed the seat of his apricot-colored breeches to the deity of detectives, opened out the casket as if it had been a book. Three letters and two locks of hair slid down upon the baize of the card-table. Peyrade was about to smile significantly at Corentin when he saw that both the locks of hair were almost white. Corentin turned away from Made-

moiselle de Cinq-Cygne, picked up one of the letters, and began to read it.

Laurence also rose and stood beside the agents at the table.

"Oh! read it aloud," she said; "that shall be your punishment."

And as they continued to read to themselves, Laurence herself took up the third letter and began:

"DEAR LAURENCE,—My husband and I have heard of your noble behavior on that sad day of our arrest. We know that you love our two darling sons both equally dearly and as much as we love them ourselves, so we are entrusting you with a legacy both sad and dear to them. *M. l'Exécuteur* has just cut off our hair, for we are to die in a very few minutes, and he has promised to give these, the only keepsakes that we can give our dearly loved orphans, into your hands. So keep these locks of our hair to give to them in better days. A last kiss and our blessing goes with each. Our last thought will be of our sons, and then of you, and afterwards of God. Love them dearly, Laurence.

"BERTHE DE CINQ-CYGNE.
"JEAN DE SIMEUSE."

There were tears in all eyes when the letter had been read.

Laurence turned a stony gaze upon the two agents, and spoke without a tremor in her voice:

"You have been less merciful than *M. l'Exécuteur!*"

Corentin quite composedly took the letter, put the locks of hair inside it, and laid it aside on the table with a heap of counters on the top as a paper-weight. There was something dreadful in the man's coolness amid the general emotion. Peyrade unfolded the other sheets.

"Oh! as to those," said Laurence, "they are almost alike. You heard the will read, now you shall see how it was carried into effect. After this my heart will have no secrets left; this is all.

"ANDERNACH, 1794,
"*Before the battle.*

"MY DEAR LAURENCE,—I shall love you so long as I live, and I want you to know this for certain; but you ought to know in case I should fall, that Paul Marie loves you as I love you. My one comfort if I fall will be the thought that some day you may take this dear brother of mine for your husband, and I shall not be eaten up with jealousy as I certainly should be if that should happen while we both were alive. After all, it seems to me very natural that you should like him better, for perhaps he is more worthy than I am . . . . and so forth.

"MARIE PAUL."

"Here is the other," she went on, while a charming color flushed her forehead.

"ANDERNACH,
"*Before the battle.*

"MY KIND LAURENCE,—There is a tinge of sadness in my nature; but Marie Paul is so bright and happy that you must care far more for him than for me. Some day, perhaps, you will be obliged to choose between us; well, then—though I love you passionately . . . ."

"You have been in correspondence with *émigrés*," broke in Peyrade, and by way of precaution he held up the letters to the light to see if anything were written in sympathetic ink between the lines.

"Yes," said Laurence, folding up the precious letters, yellowed by time. "But what right have you to force an entrance into my house, to violate the liberty of the subject and all the sacred rights of the hearth?"

"Ah, indeed!" said Peyrade. "What right? You shall be informed, fair aristocrat." He drew from his pocket, as he spoke, an order from the Minister of Justice, countersigned by the Minister of the Interior. "Look you here, citoyenne, the Ministers have taken a notion into their heads——"

"We might ask you what right you have to harbor assassins of the First Consul," said Corentin, lowering his voice for her ear. "When you struck me just now with your riding-whip, you gave me a right to strike a blow in my turn to despatch my lords your cousins—when I had come to save them."

The curé, watching them, knew what was said by the expression of Laurence's eyes, and the movement of the lips of the great unknown actor; he made a sign to Laurence to beware. Nobody but Goulard saw the gesture. Peyrade was tapping the bottom of the box to see if it was hollow.

"Ah, God!" cried Laurence, snatching away the lid, "do ot break it. Wait!"

She took a pin and pressed it against one of the figures; a spring gave way, the lid came in two, and disclosed two ivory miniatures painted in Germany: the portraits of the Simeuses in the uniforms of the Army of Condé. Corentin, thus confronted by an adversary worthy of his anger, withdrew into a corner with Peyrade. There was a whispered conference.

"And you threw *that* on the fire!" said the Abbé Goujet, looking at the old Marquise's letters and the locks of hair.

For all answer Laurence shrugged her shoulders significantly. The curé knew that she had made this supreme sacrifice to keep the spies in play and gain time. He raised his eyes in admiration.

"But where can they have caught Gothard? I can hear him crying," she added, loud enough to be heard.

"I do not know," said the curé.

"Had he gone to the farm?"

"Farm!" repeated Peyrade. "Let us send somebody there."

"No," returned Corentin; "that girl would not have trusted her cousins' lives to a tenant. She is amusing us. Do as I tell you. We made a blunder when we came here; we will at least find out something before we go."

Corentin went and stood with his back to the fire, and raised his long, pointed coat-tails to warm himself. From

his manner, look, and tone, he might have been there on a visit.

"Ladies, you may retire to bed, and the servants likewise. M. le Maire, your services are no longer required. We acted upon strict orders, and could not do otherwise than we have done; but when all the walls, which are very thick, it seems to me, have been examined, we shall go."

The mayor took leave of the company and went. Neither the curé nor Mademoiselle Goujet stirred, and the servants were too anxious not to stay and see what happened to their mistress. Ever since Laurence came into the room, Madame d'Hauteserre, with a despairing mother's curious gaze, had been poring on the girl's face. Now she took Laurence by the arm, and drew her into a corner, murmuring, "Have you seen them?"

"How could I have allowed your sons to come under our roof without your knowledge?" returned Laurence. "Durieu," she added, "go and see if it is possible to save my poor Stella; she is still breathing."

"Has she been ridden far?" asked Corentin.

"Thirty-seven miles in three hours," said Laurence, addressing her remark to the curé, who gazed at her in dull amazement. "I went out at half-past nine, and it was after one o'clock when I came in."

She looked at the clock as she spoke. It was then half-past two.

"Then you do not deny that you have ridden thirty-seven miles?" remarked Corentin.

"No," said she. "I admit that my cousins and the MM. d'Hauteserre, in their perfect innocence, meant to make application to be included in the amnesty, and they were on their way back to Cinq-Cygne. So as soon as I had reason to believe that the Sieur Malin meant to implicate them in some treasonable plot, I went to warn them to return to Germany. They will be safely across the frontier before the message can be signaled from Troyes to stop them. If this was a crime, let me be punished for it."

Laurence's reply had been well thought out; it was so plausible in every respect that Corentin was staggered by it. The Countess watched the agent out of the corner of her eye. Just at this critical moment, when all souls were hanging as it were upon the two faces, and all eyes went from Laurence to Corentin, and from Corentin to Laurence, the sound of a galloping horse reached them from the forest. It grew nearer and nearer, till the rider crossed the bridge and the paved way across the lawn. There was a look of ghastly dread in every face.

It was Peyrade who came in, his face radiant with delight. He hurried to his colleague, and said, loud enough for the Countess to overhear him:

"We have got Michu!"

Anguish, physical exhaustion, and the strain upon every mental faculty had brought the red color to Laurence's cheeks; now she grew white once more, and fell, as if thunder-stricken, half fainting into a chair. La Durieu, Mademoiselle Goujet, and Madame d'Hauteserre sprang towards her. She gasped for breath. She signed to them to cut the loops of braid that fastened her riding-habit.

"She was taken in by it. . . . They are on the way to Paris!" said Corentin, conferring with Peyrade. "Let us change the orders."

The pair went out, leaving a gendarme on guard at the door. Their diabolical ingenuity had won them a cruel advantage in this duel; they had ensnared Laurence by a common artifice.

At six o'clock in the morning, with the first gray light, the agents of police came back again. They had explored the hollow lane, and convinced themselves that horses had taken the way into the forest. The château was guarded by gendarmes under a constable's order, while they went off to breakfast at the little wine-shop in the village of Cinq-Cygne; but not before orders had been given that Catherine, persistently stolid and silent, and Gothard, who replied to every question by an outbreak of tears, should both be set at liberty.

Catherine and Gothard came into the drawing-room, where Laurence was lying in the great low chair, and kissed their mistress' hands. Durieu came in a while to say that Stella was out of danger, though her condition needed great care.

The mayor, fidgety and inquisitive, met Peyrade and Corentin in the village. He could not allow government officials of so high a rank to breakfast in a wretched village wine-shop, and brought them home. The Abbey lay about half a mile away, and on the road thither Peyrade bethought himself that the Arcis constable had not succeeded in bringing any news of Michu or Violette.

"We have no common people to deal with," remarked Corentin. "They are too clever for us. The priest has a hand in it, no doubt."

Madame Goulard had just brought her guests into the vast, fireless dining-hall, when the lieutenant arrived with a scared face.

"We have just come across the Arcis constable's horse, riderless in the forest," he told Peyrade.

"Run round to Michu's lodge, lieutenant!" cried Corentin. "Find out what is going on there. Perhaps they have killed the constable."

This news spoiled the mayor's breakfast. Huntsmen eating at a halting-place could not have bolted their provisions more rapidly than the two Parisians; and the meal over, they drove back to the château in their basket-chaise with the post-horse, so as to bear down as quickly as possible upon any point, as it might prove necessary.

When they entered the drawing-room whither they had suddenly brought trouble and dismay and sorrow, and the most cruel anxiety, they found Laurence, in a loose wrapper, old M. d'Hauteserre and his wife, and the Abbé Goujet and his sister, all seated about the fire, and to all appearance, quiet in their minds.

"If they had really caught Michu they would have brought him in," Laurence had said to herself. "It is mortifying to think that I lost my self-command, and threw a light on

those wretches' suspicions; but all can be put right again. Are we going to be your prisoners for long?" she asked aloud, with a satirical, careless air.

The two spies exchanged glances.

"How can she know something of our uneasiness about Michu? Nobody outside could get into the château. She is making fools of us," their looks seemed to say.

"We shall not trouble you with our presence much longer," returned Corentin. "In three hours' time we will make our apologies for disturbing your solitude."

Nobody answered him. The contemptuous silence exasperated Corentin's inward fury. Laurence and the abbé, the two intellects of this little group, had exchanged views of Corentin to their mutual edification. Catherine and Gothard set the table by the fire, and the curé and his sister joined the family at breakfast. Neither they nor their servants paid the slightest attention to the spies, and Corentin and Peyrade walked up and down in the gardens, in the court, and along the road, returning now and again to the drawing-room.

At half-past two o'clock the lieutenant put in an appearance.

"I have found the constable," he reported to Corentin; "he was lying on the road between the Cinq-Cygne lodge, as they call it, and Bellache. He had no wound except a frightful cut on the head; it looked as if he had got it with that fall. He was knocked backwards off his horse so suddenly that he cannot explain how it happened, he says. His feet slipped out of the stirrups or he would have been dead by now; his horse took fright and might have dragged him along the ground. We left him in charge of Michu and Violette——"

"What! Is Michu at the lodge?" asked Corentin, watching Laurence as he spoke. The Countess smiled shrewdly to herself, a woman's retaliation.

"He and Violette began bargaining last night, and when I saw him they were near the finish," said the lieutenant. "They were both of them a bit flustered, it seemed to me, and no wonder; they have been making a night of it together and have not managed to hit it off yet."

"Did Violette tell you so?" cried Corentin.

"Yes."

"Ah! if you want a thing done you must do it yourself!" said Peyrade, looking at Corentin, who seemed to share his poor opinion of the lieutenant's intelligence, and nodded assent to his serious remark.

"When did you reach Michu's place?" asked Corentin. Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne had glanced at the clock, and this fact had not been lost upon him.

"Somewhere about two o'clock," the lieutenant replied.

Laurence included Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, the Abbé Goujet and his sister in one glance, that seemed to envelop them in a mantle of blue light; the joy of triumph glittered in her eyes; there was color in her cheeks, there were tears beneath her lashes. The girl that had been so strong to endure could shed no tears but tears of gladness. She was transfigured for them, especially for the curé; he had been almost vexed by Laurence's masculine strength of character; now he saw the woman's exceeding tenderness. Laurence's sensibilities lay like hidden treasure in some unfathomed depths beneath a block of granite.

A gendarme came to ask whether Michu's son was to be allowed to come in; he had brought a message from his father to the gentlemen from Paris. Corentin nodded. François Michu, a sharp boy, and a chip of the old block, was outside in the yard meanwhile; and Gothard, now at liberty, had time to exchange a word or two with him under the gendarme's nose. That functionary did not observe that the boy slipped something into Gothard's hand; and so little Michu accomplished his errand. Gothard stole in behind François, reached Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, and with an innocent air, gave her back both halves of the broken ring. Laurence kissed it with passionate fervor; she knew now that Michu had redeemed his word and that the four nobles were in safety. Meanwhile François was delivering his message.

"Dad wants to know what to do with the constable; he is in a bad way."

"What is the matter with him?" asked Peyrade.

"It's his head; he came a cropper though and no mistake. For a *gindarme* as knows how to ride a horse, that is bad luck, but he must have stumbled! There is a hole, oh! as big as your fist at the back of his head. Seems that it was his luck to come down on a nasty flint. Poor man! Much good his being a *gindarme* does him; he suffers all the same, till it makes you sorry to see it."

The captain from Troyes rode into the courtyard, dismounted, and beckoned to Corentin. Corentin rushed to the window and flung it open to save time.

"What is the matter?"

"We have come back like Dutchmen!" he said. "Five horses have been found ridden to death, hair stiff with sweat, right in the middle of the main avenue through the forest. I have had them kept so that we may find out where they came from and who supplied them. There is a cordon round the forest; nobody inside can get out now."

"When do you think these horsemen came into the forest?"

"At half-past twelve at noon."

"Don't let a hare leave unseen," said Corentin, lowering his voice. "I will leave Peyrade here, and go to see the constable, poor fellow, directly." Then turning to Peyrade, "Stop at the mayor's house; I will send a sharp man to relieve you," he added. "We must make use of the people hereabouts; notice all the faces there."

Then he turned to the company. "*Au revoir!*" he exclaimed, with an appalling ring in his voice. Nobody spoke or moved when the agents of police went out.

"A fruitless domiciliary visit! what will Fouché say?" exclaimed Peyrade, as he handed Corentin into the basket-chaise.

"Oh! all is not over," returned Corentin, in his associate's ear; "the Simeuses are sure to be in the forest."

Laurence was standing in one of the great windows of the dining-room, looking out at them through the small square panes. Corentin glanced significantly towards her.

"There was another once that was at least her equal," he said. "She stirred my bile too much, and I did for her. If this one falls into my power again I will pay her out for that cut with the whip."

"The other* was an adventuress," said Peyrade, "and this one is——"

"Does that make any difference to me? All are fish in the sea," said Corentin, with a sign to the gendarme to whip up the post-horse.

Ten minutes later the château was completely and entirely evacuated.

"How was the constable got out of the way?" asked Laurence of François Michu. She had food brought for him and made him sit beside her.

"Father and mother said that it was a matter of life and death, and that nobody was to come into the house. So I knew, when I heard horses going about in the forest, that I had to do with those beastly gendarmes, and I tried to keep them from coming to us. I brought down some thick cord out of our garret, and tied it firmly to a tree just at the opening of each way. And while I was about it I tied the cord high up so as to catch a man on horseback across the chest, and left the other end loose till I heard a horse come galloping down one of the roads. Then I made the end fast to the tree opposite, and the road was barred. It fell out all right. The moon had set, the constable came a cropper, but he was not killed. What can you expect? They are so tough, are gendarmes. After all, one does what one can."

"You saved us!" Laurence said, giving the child a kiss She went with him as far as the gate, and then looking round to make sure that no one was near, she whispered, "Have they provisions?"

"I have just taken them a twelve-pound loaf and four bottles of wine. They will keep close for six days."

Laurence went back to the drawing-room. Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, the Abbé Goujet and his sister, looked

*See *Les Chouans.*

at her with questioning eyes in which anxiety and admiration were equally blended.

"Have you really seen them again?" cried Madame d'Hauteserre.

But Laurence, smiling, laid a finger on her lips, and went upstairs to bed. When once the victory was won, weariness overcame her.

The shortest way from Cinq-Cygne to Michu's lodge was by the road from the village to Bellache; it debouched upon the circular space where the detectives first appeared to Michu, on the previous evening. The Arcis constable had come this way, and the gendarmes now brought Corentin over the same ground. The agent, as he went, was on the lookout for any trace of the means by which the constable was thrown out of the saddle. He rated himself for sending a single man to clear up so important a point, and drew an axiom from the experience to incorporate in a code which he was compiling for his own private use.

"If they put the gendarme out of the way," thought he, "they will have got rid of Violette as well. The five dead horses evidently brought back Michu and the four conspirators from the neighborhood of Paris. Has Michu a horse?" he asked, turning to the gendarme, who happened to belong to the Arcis contingent.

"Ah! yes, and a famous nag it is; a hunter out of the *ci-devant* Marquis' stables. Fifteen years old and only the better for age. Michu will ride thirty miles and more, and the animal's hide will be as dry as my hat. Oh! he thinks a lot of his horse; he won't take money for it."

"What is the horse like?"

"A dark bay, spotted with white about the feet. A thin animal, all muscle, like an Arab."

"Have you seen Arabian horses?"

"I came back from Egypt a year ago. I have ridden the Mamelukes' horses. You serve eleven years in the cavalry. I crossed the Rhine with General Steingel, then I was in

Italy, and I followed the First Consul in Egypt. So I shall be a corporal soon."

"While I am in Michu's lodge, just go round to the stable. If you have lived among horses for eleven years you ought to know when a horse has been ridden hard."

"There! that is where our corporal was thrown," said the man, pointing to the spot where the road emerged into the open space.

"Tell the captain to call for me at the lodge here, and we will go together back to Troyes."

Corentin alighted, and spent several minutes in observing the place. He scrutinized the elm-trees that stood on either side. One grew close beside the park wall, the other on the high boundary bank of the circle, which was intersected at this point by the cross-road. And at length Corentin saw something which every one else had passed over, to wit, a button lying in the dust, a button from a gendarme's uniform. He picked it up. As he entered the lodge, he beheld Violette and Michu sitting at the kitchen table. The dispute was still unfinished. Violette got up, made a bow, and offered Corentin some wine.

"Thanks. . . . I should like to see the corporal," returned Corentin. He saw at a glance that Violette had been drunk for more than twelve hours.

"My wife is nursing him upstairs," said Michu. Corentin sprang up the staircase, and found the gendarme lying on Madame Michu's bed, his head covered with poultices. The man's cap, sword, and shoulder-belt lay on a chair. Marthe, all unaware of her son's prowess, was true to her woman's instinct; she and her mother were nursing the wounded man.

"Well, corporal, how are you doing?" asked Corentin.

"M. Varlet, the Arcis doctor, is expected," Madame Michu replied. "Gaucher has gone to fetch him."

"Leave us a moment," said Corentin, feeling not a little surprised by this scene, for the women's innocence was obvious. "Where were you hit?" he asked, looking at the man's uniform.

"Well, Corporal, how are you doing?"

[illegible] First [illegible] Egypt. So I [illegible]

[illegible] lodge, just [illegible] round to the stable [illegible] horse [illegible] you [illegible] been [illegible]

[illegible] thrown," said [illegible] got where the road emerged into the [illegible]

[illegible] at the lodge here, and we [illegible]

[illegible] several minutes in observing [illegible] that stood [illegible] grew [illegible] the other [illegible] boundary [illegible] which was intersected [illegible] this point by the [illegible] road. And at length Corentin [illegible] which [illegible] else had passed over, [illegible] a button from a [illegible] [illegible] As he entered the lodge, he [illegible] sitting at the kitchen table. The [illegible] Vionette got up, made a bow, and [illegible] some wine.

"The [illegible] I should like to see the corporal," [illegible] He saw at a glance that Vionette had [illegible] more than twelve hours.

"[illegible] nursing him up [illegible]," said Mr[illegible] Corentin [illegible] and found the gendarme [illegible] M[illegible] had, his head covered with poultices. The [illegible] and [illegible] belt lay on a chair. Mr[illegible] [illegible] her son's process, was true to her [illegible] and her mother were nursing the wounded man.

"Well, corporal, how are you doing?" asked Corentin.

"M. Varlet, the [illegible] doctor, is expected," Madame M[illegible] [illegible] "[illegible] gone to fetch him."

"Leave us a [illegible]," said Corentin, feeling not a little [illegible] by this [illegible] for the women's innocence [illegible] "Where were you hit?" he asked, looking at [illegible] uniform.

"Well, corporal, how are you doing?" asked Corentin

"In the chest."

"Let us have a look at your shoulder-belt."

A yellow leather belt with white pipings formed part of the uniform of the "National Gendarmes," as they used to be called, a recent law having prescribed the costume and regulated it down to the smallest details. On the belt was a plate similar to the one at present worn by rural policemen, with the singular legend engraved duly upon it, "Respect individuals and property." The cord, of course, had left a deep score across the belt. Corentin took up the coat and found the place of the missing button.

"When did they pick you up?" he asked.

"Why, at daybreak."

"Did they bring you up here at once?" continued Corentin, noticing that the bed had not been slept in.

"Yes."

"Who brought you up?"

"The women and Michu's boy; he found me lying unconscious."

"Good!" thought Corentin to himself. "Then they were up all night. It is clear that the corporal was not knocked off his horse by a bullet, nor yet by a blow from a stick; for in that case the man that dealt the blow must have been on horseback and on a level with him. So he must have been disarmed by something put across the road. A piece of wood? Impossible. An iron chain? It would have left marks. What did you feel?" he asked aloud, scrutinizing the corporal as he spoke.

"I was knocked off so suddenly——"

"The skin is grazed under your chin."

"It seems to me that a rope sawed me across the face."

"I have it," said Corentin. "Somebody tied a rope across the road to stop you——"

"Very likely," returned the corporal.

Corentin went down into the kitchen.

"Come, old scoundrel, let us have done with it!" Michu was saying; he spoke to Violette, and looked at the spy. "A

hundred and twenty thousand francs in all, and my land is yours. I shall put the money in the funds and be independent."

"As there is but one God, I have only sixty thousand, I tell you."

"But when I offer you time for the rest! And here we have been bargaining since yesterday and cannot come to terms! . . . There is no better land anywhere."

"My land is good," retorted Violette.

"Wife, bring us some wine!" cried Michu.

"What, haven't you had enough to drink?" called Marthe's mother. "This is the fourteenth bottle since nine o'clock yesterday."

"Have you been here since nine o'clock this morning?" said Corentin, turning on Violette.

"No, asking your pardon. I haven't stirred from the place since nine o'clock yesterday night, and I am none the nearer the end. The more he makes me drink, the more he wants for his land."

"In making a bargain, you raise the price every time you raise your elbow," said Corentin.

A dozen empty bottles at the end of the table bore out the truth of the old grandmother's statement. Just at that moment the gendarme outside beckoned to Corentin.

"There is no horse in the stable," he said in a low voice, when they stood on the threshold. Corentin went in again.

"You have sent your boy to town on horseback, I expect," he remarked, "so he will be back again before long."

"No, sir," said Marthe; "he has gone on foot."

"Well, then, what have you done with your horse?"

"Lent him," Michu answered curtly.

"Come you here, my good apostle," said Corentin, beckoning to the bailiff. "I have a word or two to slip down your ear-tube."

Corentin and Michu went out together.

"That rifle that you were loading yesterday at four o'clock was meant to kill the State Councillor. Grévin saw you,

but you cannot be nabbed for that; there was plenty of malice aforethought, but witnesses are scarce. You put Violette to sleep, I do not know how, and you and your wife and boy spent the night out of doors: first, to warn Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne of our coming, and afterwards to rescue her cousins. You brought them back here, I do not know where as yet. Your boy and your wife brought down the corporal cleverly enough. In fact, you have beaten us. You are a famous, fine fellow. But the last word has not been said, and we shall not leave you to say it. Will you come to terms? Your masters will not be losers by it."

"Come this way; we can talk without being overheard," returned Michu; and he led the spy as far as the pond in the park. When Corentin saw the sheet of water, he looked Michu steadily in the eyes. Michu, no doubt, counted on his great physical strength to heave his companion into seven feet of mud below three feet of water. Michu looked back at him quite as steadily. Just so might some tawny-red Brazilian jaguar have gazed defiantly at a cold-blooded, flaccid boa-constrictor.

"I am not thirsty," remarked Corentin. He stood on the edge of the meadow, and his hand traveled down into a side pocket for the little dagger.

"We cannot come to an understanding," Michu remarked indifferently.

"Mind how you behave yourself, my dear fellow. Justice will keep an eye on you."

"If Justice sees no better than you do, nobody is safe."

"Do you refuse?" Corentin asked significantly.

"I would sooner have my throat cut a hundred times over, than have an understanding with such a rascal as you."

Corentin stepped briskly into the chaise after scanning Michu, the lodge, and Couraut, who barked after him. He left orders of some kind in Troyes and returned to Paris. Secret instructions and orders were issued to all the brigades of gendarmerie.

The search was kept up diligently and unremittingly in

every little hamlet through the months of December, January, and February. Ears were listening in every little public house. Three important things Corentin discovered. A horse answering to the description of Michu's nag was found dead near Lagny. The five horses buried in the Forest of Nodesme had been sold for five hundred francs apiece by various farmers and millers to a man who evidently must have been Michu. When the law was passed against Georges' accomplices and those who harbored them, Corentin narrowed the police supervision to the Forest of Nodesme, and later, after the arrest of Pichegru and Moreau, the strange faces disappeared from the countryside.

By that time Michu had lost his place. The Arcis notary brought instructions in writing from State Councillor Malin (now a senator) authorizing Grévin to receive the bailiff's accounts, and to give him notice to quit. In three days' time Michu obtained his discharge in due form, and became his own master. To the no small astonishment of the countryside, he took up his abode at Cinq-Cygne, and managed the farms on all the reserves of the château for Laurence. The day of his installation was the fatal day of the Duc d'Enghien's execution. Almost all over France men heard simultaneously of the Prince's capture, trial, sentence, and death; the dreadful reprisals which preceded the trials of Polignac, Rivière, and Moreau.

II.

CORENTIN'S REVENGE

A FARM-HOUSE was to be built for Michu, but in the meantime the so-called Judas was lodged in the outbuilding above the stables, close to the famous breach in the fosse. Michu bought two horses, one for himself and one for little François, for they, as well as Gothard, now went everywhere with Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. People think nowadays that she used to take supplies to the four nobles, and to see that they wanted for nothing. François and Gothard, with Couraut and the Countess' hunting dogs, kept watch over the neighborhood of the hiding-place, to make sure that there was nobody within range, while Laurence and Michu carried provisions prepared by Marthe and her mother to Catherine without the knowledge of the servants. The secret was known to very few persons, for not a soul could doubt that there were spies in the village.

So, from motives of prudence, this expedition was never made oftener than twice in a week, and always at different hours, sometimes in the daytime, sometimes at night; nor did Laurence and Michu relax their vigilance during the trials of Polignac, Rivière, and Moreau. When a decree of the Senate called the Bonaparte family to the Imperial dignity, and Napoleon's nomination as Emperor was submitted to the French people, M. d'Hauteserre gave his signature to the memorial presented to him by Goulard. At length it was known that the Pope would anoint and crown Napoleon; and thenceforth when it was proposed that the Simeuses and the young d'Hauteserres should make petition to be struck off the List of *émigrés,* and to recover their citizens' rights, Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne made no objection.

Old d'Hauteserre hurried off to Paris forthwith, and obtained an interview with the *ci-devant* Marquis de Chargebœuf, a personal acquaintance of M. de Talleyrand's. The Prince de Talleyrand was then in favor; he undertook that the petition should reach Joséphine, and Joséphine laid it before her husband. Bonaparte was already called Emperor, Sire, and Your Majesty, though the results of the ballot were not yet known. M. de Chargebœuf, M. d'Hauteserre, and the Abbé Goujet (who likewise had come to Paris) obtained audience of Talleyrand, and a promise of his support. Napoleon had already pardoned the principal actors in the great Royalist conspiracy against him, and the four gentlemen of the petition were merely suspected of complicity; yet when the Council of State rose, the Emperor summoned Malin, Fouché, Talleyrand, Cambacérès, Lebrun, and Dubois, the Prefect of Police, into his cabinet.

"Gentlemen," began the future Emperor, still in the dress of the First Consul, "gentlemen, we have received a memorial from the Sieurs de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre, officers in the Army of Condé, praying for an authorization to return to France."

"They are in France now," said Fouché.

"So are hundreds of others that I come across in Paris," remarked Talleyrand.

"You have never come across *these,* I think," returned Malin, "for they are in hiding in the Forest of Nodesme, and feel quite at home there."

Malin was very careful not to inform either the First Consul or Fouché of those few words that had saved his life; but relying entirely upon Corentin's reports, he convinced the Council that the four nobles were implicated in the Rivière and Polignac affair, and that Michu had been privy to it. His assertions were corroborated by the Prefect of Police.

"But how came this bailiff to know that the plot was discovered, when no one was in the secret save the Emperor, his councillors, and I myself?" asked Dubois, but nobody paid any attention to him.

"If they are in hiding in a forest and you have been looking for them for seven months," said Napoleon, addressing Fouché, "they have indeed expiated their sins!"

Malin was alarmed by Dubois' clear-sightedness. "They are my personal enemies," he said; "that is enough, I follow your Majesty's example; so I petition that their names may be struck off the list, and intercede with your Majesty for them."

"They will be less dangerous for you as citizens than as *émigrés,*" observed Fouché, looking steadily at Malin; "for they will take the oath to uphold the Constitution under the Empire and to obey the laws."

"In what way are they dangerous to M. le Sénateur?" asked Napoleon.

The Prince de Talleyrand, on this, spoke for some time in a low voice with the future Emperor, and to all appearances the petition was granted; the MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre were to be struck out from the List of *émigrés* and reinstated as citizens.

"Sire," said Fouché, "you may hear of them again."

At the instance of the Duc de Grandlieu, Talleyrand had promised on behalf of the four young men, that on the honor of a noble—a formula which exerted a great influence over Napoleon—they would attempt nothing against the Emperor, and make their submission without reservation.

"The MM. d'Hauteserre and de Simeuse have no wish to bear arms against France after the recent events. They have not much sympathy with the Imperial Government; they are people whom your Majesty must win over; but they will be content to live as law-abiding citizens on French soil," said the Minister. And he laid a letter expressing these views before Napoleon's eyes.

"Anything so outspoken must be sincere," said the Emperor, glancing at Cambacérès and Lebrun. "Have you any objections left?" he added, turning to Fouché.

"In your Majesty's interests, I ask permission to send these gentlemen the formal announcement of the erasure of their

names," replied the future Minister of Police, adding aloud, *"when it shall be definitely granted."*

"So be it," said Napoleon. He thought that Fouché looked dissatisfied.

So the little council broke up, and the affair apparently was not at an end; one result of it was that a vague suspicion was associated with the names of the exiles in Napoleon's memory.

M. d'Hauteserre, sure of success, had written home to tell the good news, and the inmates of Cinq-Cygne consequently were not surprised when Goulard came a few days later to bid Madame d'Hauteserre and Laurence send the exiles to Troyes, where the Prefect would take their oath of allegiance to the Empire and the laws, and hand over the decree which reinstated them in their civic rights. Laurence told the mayor that she would send notice to her cousins and the two d'Hauteserres.

"Then they are not here?" remarked Goulard.

Madame d'Hauteserre looked up with an anxious face as Laurence left the mayor and went to take counsel with Michu. Michu saw no objection to the immediate enlargement of the exiles; so Laurence, with the Michus and Gothard, rode out into the forest, taking an extra horse with them, for the Countess meant to accompany her cousins to Troyes, and afterwards home to the château. All the servants heard the good news, and were out upon the lawn to watch the departure of the happy cavalcade.

The four young men left their hiding-place, mounted their horses without being seen, and took the road to Troyes, Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne riding with them. Michu, meanwhile, with Gothard and François to help him, blocked up the mouth of the cave, and the three returned on foot; but on the way it occurred to Michu that the spoons and forks and a silver goblet which his masters had in use had been forgotten. He went back alone to look for them.

He had reached the margin of the pool, when he heard voices in the hole, and went straight to the opening among the bushes.

"You have come back to look for your plate, no doubt!"

It was Peyrade's voice; it was Peyrade's big red face grinning at him through the leaves.

A sudden pang seemed to shoot through every joint in Michu's body, so intense was the vague, indefinite foreboding, the premonition of coming trouble; he could not account for it; the young Simeuses were in safety at last. He came forward, however, and met Corentin on the steps with a tallow dip in his hand.

"We are not spiteful," said this person; "we might have nabbed your *ci-devants* a week ago, but we knew their names were taken off the List. . . . You are an uncommonly knowing dog! And you gave us so much trouble that at least we must satisfy our curiosity."

"I would give something to know for how much we were sold and who sold us," cried Michu.

"If that tickles your curiosity so much, my boy," said Peyrade, with a smile, "look at your horses' shoes, and you will see that you have betrayed yourselves."

"No malice," added Corentin, beckoning the captain of gendarmes to come up with the horses.

"That miserable smith from Paris who shod horses so well in the English fashion, and has left Cinq-Cygne since, was in their pay," exclaimed Michu. "They had only to send one of their people, disguised as a faggot-cutter or a poacher, to follow up the tracks of our horses when it was damp, after the man had put those nails in the shoes. We are quits."

Michu pretty soon took comfort; he bethought himself that now, when the gentlemen were Frenchmen again and at liberty, the discovery of the hiding-place could do them no harm. And yet his forebodings were well founded. The police and the Jesuits have this virtue—they never forget their friends nor their enemies.

Old d'Hauteserre came back from Paris, and not a little surpised was he to find the good news arrived before him. Durieu made ready the most succulent of dinners. The servants wore their best clothes; the whole household waited

impatiently for the exiles, and towards four o'clock they came home, joyful yet humiliated, for they were to be under the supervision of the police authorities for two years. The whole of that time they must be resident in the commune of Cinq-Cygne, while they were bound to report themselves every month at the prefecture.

"I will send you the register to sign," the Prefect had said. "Then in a few months' time you can make application for a remission of the conditions, which were imposed at the same time on all Pichegru's accomplices. I will support your demand."

These restrictions, though well enough merited, had a little damped the young people's spirits. But Laurence burst out laughing.

"The Emperor of the French," she said, "was not very well brought up; he is not accustomed yet to pardon."

When the party reached the iron gate, they found every one from the château there to meet them, as well as a goodly proportion of the folk from the village waiting upon the road to see the young nobles; for the fame of their adventures filled the department. Madame d'Hauteserre held her sons for a long time in her arms; it was a tearful face that she turned upon them all; she could say nothing, and sat, overcome but happy, for a good while that evening.

As soon as the twin brothers appeared and dismounted, there was a general cry of surprise, so astonishingly alike were they,—the same expression, the same voice, the same tricks of manner. They rose in the saddle, flung a leg over the crupper, and threw back the bridle, to dismount as if by one accord; and seemed the more like a genuine pair of Ménechmes because they were dressed exactly alike. They wore boots *à la* Suwaroff, fitting closely over the instep; tight, white doeskin breeches, green shooting jackets with metal buttons, black cravats, and doeskin gloves. They were "charming cavaliers," as the saying went in those days, were these two young men of thirty-one. Of average height, but well set-up, they had shapely foreheads, dark hair, swarthy pale faces,

and bright eyes, liquid as the eyes of children, beneath the fringe of long lashes. Their speech, gentle as a woman's, fell graciously from their shapely red lips. Their manners, finer and more polished than the manners of the country noblesse, showed that a knowledge of men and the world had been for them a second education, more important even than the first in the making of an accomplished gentleman.

Thanks to Michu they had never wanted money; they had been able to travel, they had been well received at foreign courts. Old M. d'Hauteserre and the abbé thought their manner somewhat lofty, but in their position this was perhaps the result of a lofty nature. And while in many little ways it was evident that they had received a careful education, they excelled also in all physical exercises.

The only difference that could be seen in them was a difference of temperament. The gayety of the younger was as charming as the tinge of melancholy in the older brother; but even this contrast was one simply of mental attitude and only perceptible after a long intimacy.

"Ah! my girl," Michu said in Marthe's ear, "how could one help being devoted to those two lads?"

And Marthe, looking with eyes of feminine and motherly admiration, gave her husband a charming little nod and squeezed his hand. The servants were permitted to embrace their new masters.

Many times during the seven months of hiding, the four gentlemen had walked abroad; it was a piece of necessary imprudence; and Michu, his son, and Gothard were always on the watch. During those walks, by the light of starlit nights, Laurence had connected the present with the past of their common life, and felt the impossibility of choosing between the brothers. An unselfish love for them both was equally strong in her. It seemed to her that she had two hearts. And Marie Paul and Paul Marie had not dared to speak of the now imminent rivalry. Perhaps, as yet, all three of them had left chance to decide; but Laurence evidently felt the position of their minds, for after an instant of visible

hesitation she gave an arm to both brothers and went towards the salon, followed by Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, who clung about their sons, plying them with questions. The servants sent up a shout of "Long live the Cinq-Cygnes and the Simeuses!"

And Laurence, standing between the brothers, turned to thank them with a charming gesture.

When these nine people began to observe one another—for after every meeting even of members of the same family, the time comes when they all begin to notice the changes made by long absence—Adrien's first glance at Laurence made it clear to his mother and the abbé, who happened to see it, that the young man was in love with Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. Adrien was the younger d'Hauteserre. His nature was gentle and kindly, and in spite of the catastrophes that had tried the man, he had still a boy's heart. In this respect he was like a great many military men; a life of continual peril leaves no space for love; and the bashfulness that becomes youth so well, weighed upon the man of thirty. Adrien was a complete contrast to his brother, a rough-looking man, a mighty hunter and valorous soldier, resolute but heavy and matter-of-fact, lacking in mental quickness as in refinement of feeling. The life of the one was contemplative, that of the other active; yet both were men of honor according to their rank in life.

Yet Adrien d'Hauteserre, dark-haired, short, slight, and spare, gave the impression of great strength, while his tall, big, fair-haired brother looked like a weakling. Adrien was of nervous temperament; he possessed strength of soul, while his lymphatic brother Robert delighted in trials of muscular force. Interesting though it might be to inquire into the causes of a freak of nature not unfrequently seen in family histories, the fact can merely be touched upon here by way of explanation of the fact that Adrien had no rival to fear in his brother.

Robert's feeling toward Laurence was made up of a cousin's

affection and a noble's respect for a young woman belonging to his own order. As for his manner of regarding women, Robert d'Hauteserre belonged to that section of mankind who hold that woman is a kind of appendage to man, and that the function of maternity is purely physical. They look for physical perfections in full measure, and count a woman as naught. To consider a woman as anything but a cipher socially, politically, and in the family, according to these authorities, would turn society upside down. In these days we have traveled so far from the views held by society in its primitive state, that even though a woman may not wish for the insidious liberty offered her by divers new sects, she may well be scandalized by such opinions; but Robert d'Hauteserre had the misfortune to hold them. Robert belonged to the Dark Ages; Adrien to the Nineteenth Century. These differences, so far from estranging the brothers, drew them more closely together. The curé, Mademoiselle Goujet, and Madame d'Hauteserre discerned and grasped the significance of the shades of character in the course of the evening over their game at boston. Even now they saw difficulties ahead.

At twenty-three years of age, after a life of solitary thought, after the anguish of the failure of a vast political project, Laurence became a woman again. She felt a great craving for affection; she brought all the charm of her mind into play; she was enchanting with the unconsciousness of a girl of fifteen; she showed how fascinating she could be in her tenderness. For the last thirteen years she had been a woman only through a woman's suffering. Now the lost years should be made good for her. She would show herself loving and coquettish, as hitherto she had been strong and great.

The four old people stayed on in the salon till every one else had gone, and shook their heads over this new phase in a charming maiden. What possibilities of passion might there not be in a girl of her temper and nobility? Both brothers loved the same woman equally well and equally blindly. Which of the two would Laurence choose? Would the other die of a broken heart?

Laurence was a countess in her own right. She would bring her husband a title, great privileges, an old illustrious name. Perhaps the Marquis de Simeuse, remembering this, would sacrifice himself for the sake of his brother, a poor and untitled younger son by the old law. But would the younger consent to accept the sacrifice of so great a happiness as the right of calling Laurence his wife? While they were at a distance, there were few drawbacks to the rivalry, and, moreover, the brothers' lives were so often in danger, that the hazards of war might cut the knot at any time. But what might be looked for now that the three were together? Marie Paul and Paul Marie had reached an age when passion grows in strength by all the forces of a man's nature. Could they share their fair cousin's looks, glances, words, and attentions, and not break out into jealousy that might bring fearful results to pass? What would be the end of the pleasant life that they led together?

To these suggestions, brought up one by one over the last game of boston, Madame d'Hauteserre had her answer: she did not believe that Laurence would marry either of her cousins. In the course of the evening the old gentlewoman felt one of the inexplicable presentiments which remain a secret between mothers and God. And Laurence's conscience felt no less dismay over this *tête-à-tête* with her cousins. To the exciting drama of the plot, to the days when their lives were in danger, to the years of adversity and emigration, another drama had succeeded, a drama of which she had never thought. Her noble nature shrank from the abrupt measure of refusing both the twins; she was too honest a woman to marry another and to bear an irresistible passion in the depths of her heart. To remain unmarried, to weary out her cousins with delay, and then to take as her husband the one that loved her faithfully in spite of her caprices—this was a conclusion not so much deliberately chosen as dimly foreseen. As Laurence fell asleep she told herself that the wisest way was to leave fate to settle her affairs. In love, chance is a woman's providence.

Next morning Michu started for Paris, and a few days later returned with four fine horses for his new masters. The shooting would begin in six weeks' time; and the young Countess thought, not without reason, that sport with its absorbing interests would provide relief from the difficulties of the *tête-à-tête* at the château. The first result was quite unexpected; it surprised the onlookers at this strange love-affair while it roused their admiration. Without any deliberate agreement, the two brothers vied with each other in affectionate attentions; they seemed to find satisfaction in these pleasures of the soul. They were as fraternal with Laurence as with each other. Nothing more natural. After so long an absence they both felt that they must learn to know their cousin, and give her time to know them both, while they left her free to make her choice. The affection that made but one life of two lives sustained them through this ordeal. Love even as motherhood seemed as if it could know no distinction between the brothers. Laurence was obliged to give them different cravats to know them, a white one for the elder and black for the younger. But for this complete resemblance, this identity of life which deceived all beholders, such a situation would seem, and rightly seem, impossible. It is, in fact, inexplicable until it happens; it is one of those things that nobody can believe until they see it, and once seen, it requires even more mental effort to explain it than to believe it.

If Laurence spoke, her voice vibrated in the same fashion through two hearts, both alike loving and true. If she said anything ingenious or amusing her eyes met a glad response in other eyes that followed her every movement and interpreted her lightest wish; eyes that always smiled on her with a new expression of gayety or of tender melancholy.

Where the woman they loved was concerned, both the brothers showed that wonderful spontaneous impulse of heart and action in harmony with the impulse, which, according to the Abbé Goujet, reached the sublime. Often, for instance, if something was sought for, or if there was a question of one

of the little services that a man is eager to perform for the woman he loves, the elder brother would yield to the younger with a half-proud, half-pathetic glance at his cousin; and the younger made it a point of honor to repay debts of this kind.

This generous rivalry in a sentiment which sometimes reduces a man to the jealous ferocity of the brute, completely confused the ideas of the old people who were watching them.

Little things like these often brought the tears into Laurence's eyes. Perhaps it is possible to give an idea of her feelings, by recalling an experience that makes an immense impression upon more highly endowed organizations,—the memory of two beautiful voices singing together in perfect harmony. When Sontag and Malibran, for instance, sing in a duet, and that instrument, the human voice, is controlled by the genius of a great executant, then the two parts are blended in a single melody, and it is as if the sighs of one impassioned being were borne in upon the soul. Sometimes the Marquis de Simeuse, from the depths of a great armchair, would turn his intent melancholy gaze upon the younger brother, who was laughing and talking with Laurence; and to the curé, watching him, it seemed, at such times, that this was a man capable of some great act of self-sacrifice. And then again, before long, he caught the gleam of unconquerable passion in the Marquis' eyes. If either of the brothers chanced to be with Laurence, he might easily believe that he alone was loved.

"It seems to me when one is away, that they are but one," said the Countess, when the abbé questioned her as to her feelings. And then the abbé knew that coquetry was utterly lacking in Laurence. She could not realize that two men loved her.

"But, my dear little girl, you really must make up your mind sometime," Madame d'Hauteserre remonstrated one evening,—Madame d'Hauteserre, whose son was silently dying of love for Laurence.

"Let us be happy!" the girl answered. "God will save us from ourselves."

Adrien d'Hauteserre locked his gnawing jealousy into the depths of his heart, and kept his pain to himself. He knew how little hope there was for him. He was content to watch this charming girl, and indeed, during those months of suspense, Laurence shone radiantly. She had grown bewitching, she took all the pains to please that a woman takes when she is loved. She followed the fashions. More than once she made a hasty journey to Paris to appear lovelier than before in new clothes or finery. And, finally, she would give her cousins even the least pleasures of that sense of being at home to which they had so long been strangers, and, in spite of loud outcries from her guardian, she turned the château into the most comfortable place of residence in Champagne at that time.

Robert d'Hauteserre understood nothing of all this drama beneath the surface. He did not see that his brother loved Laurence. He liked to rally his cousin on her coquetry, for he confused that detestable defect with a desire to please; but Robert was equally obtuse in all matters of taste and feeling and culture. So when the representative of the Dark Ages appeared upon the scene, Laurence at once made him take the part of clown in the play. Nor did he suspect this. She amused her cousins by drawing Robert into a discussion, and leading him on insidiously till he floundered into the marsh where dulness and ignorance sink deeper at every step. She excelled in the ingenious mystifications which, to be perfect, must leave the victim quite satisfied with himself. And yet, during those pleasant days, the one really happy period in the lives of the three charming young people, Robert, coarse though his nature was, never interfered between the Simeuses and Laurence, with some virile, trenchant word which might have decided the question. The sincerity of the brothers impressed him. And he guessed, no doubt, that a woman might hesitate before showing a sign of preference for the one, when the other must be pained by it; when one brother was made happy at the expense of the other. This forbearance on Robert's part is an admirable comment upon a situation, which

would certainly have been a case referred to the higher powers, in the ages of faith when the sovereign pontiff had power to intervene to cut the Gordian knot in so phenomenal a conjuncture, so well-nigh inscrutable a mystery. The Revolution had disciplined the three in the Catholic faith, and religion increased the gravity of the crisis; for it is greatness of character that makes a great situation, and neither Monsieur nor Madame d'Hauteserre nor the Goujets looked for anything common or mean from Laurence or the Simeuses.

The drama was a secret kept within the family circle. So absorbed were they all in watching its slow yet swift progress, the succession of unlooked-for joys, little contests, fallacious preferences, disappointments, cruel suspense, explanations delayed till the morrow, and mute declarations of love, that the coronation of Napoleon passed quite unheeded by the inmates of Cinq-Cygne. And besides, they had found a truce from passion in the strenuous pleasures of the chase. Excessive physical fatigue prevented perilous excursions into the wide fields of dreamland. Neither Laurence nor her cousins gave a thought to politics; every day had palpitating interests of its own.

"Really," Mademoiselle Goujet remarked one evening, "of all these lovers I cannot tell which loves the best!"

Adrien happened to be in the room with the boston players; he looked up at the words and the color died out of his face. Lately it had only been the joy of seeing Laurence and of hearing her voice that bound him to life.

"In my opinion," said the curé, "the Countess, as a woman, loves with much less reserve."

A few minutes later Laurence came in with the two Simeuses and Robert d'Hauteserre. The newspapers had just arrived. Now that conspiracies had failed at home, England, plotting abroad, was bringing Europe into a league against France. The Emperor had meant to repay France for his election by the ruin of the English power, but the disastrous battle of Trafalgar overturned the most tremendous schemes ever planned by human genius. The camp at Boulogne was

broken up. Napoleon's armies, inferior as always in point of numbers, were about to give battle to Europe on new ground. The whole world was wondering what the result of the campaign would be.

"Oh! this time he will be beaten," said Robert, when he had read the newspaper through.

"He has all Russia and Austria on his hands," remarked Marie Paul.

"He has never manœuvered troops in Germany," added Paul Marie.

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked Laurence.

"Of the Emperor," replied all three.

Laurence gave her lovers a disdainful glance that left them crestfallen, while it sent Adrien into a rapture of joy. The slighted suitor made a gesture of admiration; the proud look on his face said plainly enough that he had no thoughts now save for Laurence.

"So, you see, love has made him forget his hate," the Abbé Goujet said, in a low voice.

This was the first, the last, and only reproach that the brothers incurred, but at that moment they were convicted of an inferiority in love compared with their cousin Laurence, who only heard the wonderful tidings of Austerlitz two months afterwards, through an argument between old d'Hauteserre and his sons. For old M. d'Hauteserre, consistent in his schemes, wished his boys to ask to serve under the Emperor; they would, no doubt, take their rank on entering the service, and a chance of a splendid career was still open to them. But the pure Royalist party was the stronger at Cinq-Cygne. Laurence and the four younger men laughed at the prudent old man, who seemed to scent coming misfortune. Possibly prudence is not so much a virtue as a kind of intellectual *sense,* if it be possible to put those words together; but the day will surely come when physiologists and philosophers will admit that the senses are, in a manner, the sheath of a vivid and penetrating projection of the intelligence.

After the conclusion of peace between France and Austria

toward the end of February, 1806, a relative of the families came over to Cinq-Cygne. This was the *ci-devant* Marquis de Chargebœuf, owner of an estate in the Seine-et-Marne with outlying lands in the Aube. The Marquis had exerted himself on behalf of his relatives at the time of the application to be taken off the List of *émigrés;* at a later time he was to give them further proof of his attachment. The family at the château were breakfasting when the Marquis arrived in a kind of calèche derisively called a *berlingot* in those days. They burst into a fit of laughter as the shabby carriage came along the narrow, paved road; but when the old man's bald head was thrust out from between the leather curtains, M. d'Hauteserre exclaimed that it was the Marquis de Chargebœuf; and they all rose from the table to pay their respects to the head of the house.

"We are to blame for allowing our relative to be beforehand with us," said the Marquis de Simeuse, addressing his brother and the d'Hauteserres. "We ought to go out to thank him."

The servant on the box-seat, a man in ordinary peasant's dress, stuck a wagoner's whip into a cumbrous leather tube, and went round to assist the Marquis to alight; but Adrien and the younger Simeuse were there before him. They undid the brass handles of the door, and helped him to descend, in spite of protests. The Marquis was wont to maintain that his yellow *berlingot* with its leather door was an excellent and commodious vehicle. Meanwhile the servant with Gothard's help had unharnessed the horses,—a pair of heavy, sturdy beasts with sleek hind quarters, equally accustomed, no doubt, to work on the land or on the road.

"In spite of the cold? Why, you show the prowess of a knight of ancient days," said Laurence, leading her aged relative into the salon.

"It is not your place to come to see an old fogy like me," he said,—a delicate way of insinuating a reproach.

"What brings him here?" old d'Hauteserre privately wondered.

M. de Chargebœuf, a neat, little, elderly gentleman of

sixty-seven, wore powder, pigeon's wings, and a bag-wig. His thin legs were encased in ribbed stockings and light-colored small-clothes; his green cloth shooting-coat was adorned with gold buttons and frogs, and his white waistcoat was dazzling with its portentous quantity of gold embroidery. A costume still worn in 1805 by elderly people harmonized well with a countenance not unlike that of the great Frederick. The Marquis never wore his cocked hat for fear of disturbing the *demi-lune* of powder on his head. He leaned his right hand on a hooked walking-cane, holding both hat and cane in a manner worthy of *le Grand Monarque.*

This worthy gentleman divested himself of a wadded silk gown, and sank into the depths of an easy-chair. His cane and cocked hat he held between his knees. None but the *roués* of the court of Louis Quinze ever possessed the secret of the attitude which left the hands free to toy with the snuff-box, always a valuable trinket. And, in fact, the Marquis now produced a very handsome snuff-box from a waistcoat pocket closed by a flap covered with gold scroll-work; and while he offered snuff with a gracious gesture and benign expression, and prepared a pinch, he had time to see, in the first place, that his visit gave his relatives genuine pleasure, and in the second, to understand why the *émigrés* had been remiss. "When people make love, they forget to pay visits," his face seemed to say.

"We are going to keep you for a few days, are we not?" said Laurence.

"That is quite out of the question," returned he. "If we were not so kept apart by events—for you have made longer journeys than the distance between our houses, dear child—you would know that I have daughters and daughters-in-law and granddaughters and grandchildren; and they would all be anxious if they did not see me to-night. I have more than forty miles to drive."

"You have very good horses," said the Marquis de Simeuse.

"Oh! I have only come from Troyes; I was there yesterday on business."

Then followed inquiries after the family, the Marquise de Chargebœuf, and matters really indifferent, in which courtesy requires us to take a lively interest. It seemed to M. d'Hauteserre that M. de Chargebœuf's object in coming had been to recommend his relatives to commit no imprudences. The times were very much changed, so the Marquis took occasion to say, and nobody could tell now what the Emperor might become.

"Oh! he will be a god," said Laurence.

Then the good Marquis talked of making concessions. And M. d'Hauteserre, hearing him discourse on the necessity of submission, with far more authority and conviction than he himself ever put into his doctrine, looked almost imploringly at his offspring.

"Would you serve that man?" asked the Marquis de Simeuse.

"Why, yes, if the interests of my family required it."

At last the Marquis began to hint vaguely at distant dangers; and, when Laurence asked him to explain himself, strongly recommended the young men to give up hunting and to keep quietly at home.

"You always think of the lands of Gondreville as your own," he said, turning to the Simeuses; "that is the way to stir up danger. I can see by your astonishment that you have no idea that there are those in Troyes who bear you ill-will; your courage has not been forgotten there. Nobody scruples to tell how you baffled the police; some praise you, some say you are the Emperor's enemies, and a few fanatics here and there are amazed at the Emperor's clemency in your case. But this is nothing. You have outwitted persons that thought themselves more than a match for you, and low people never forgive. Now all the judicial appointments in the department are, more or less, made by our enemy Malin; he has put his creatures in every post, even on the staff of prosecuting counsel; and, sooner or later, his judicial functionaries will be uncommonly well pleased to find you implicated in some delicate business. Some peasant or other will pick a quarrel with

you for trespassing over his field, you will be out with loaded guns, you have quick tempers, misfortunes may easily happen. People in your position must be in the right a hundred times over if they are not to be in the wrong. I do not say this unadvisedly. Your arrondissement is still under police supervision; a commissary is maintained in that little hole of a place, Arcis, on purpose to protect a member of the Imperial Senate from your designs on his life. He is afraid of you. And he says so."

"But it is a slander!" cried the younger brother.

"A slander! I myself think so. . . . But what does the public think? That is the important point. Michu once lay in wait for Malin. Malin has not forgotten it. Since your return, the Countess has taken Michu into her service. And so a good many people, most people in fact, think that Malin is right. You do not realize how very delicate the position is, when an *émigré* is brought in contact with the new owner of his estates. The Prefect, an intelligent man, just let fall a word or two about you yesterday, and I felt uneasy. In short I would rather not see you here——"

The Marquis' reply was received with the utmost amazement. Marie Paul rang energetically.

"Gothard," he said, when the little fellow came, "go and fetch Michu."

It was not long before the ex-bailiff of Gondreville appeared.

"Michu, my friend," began the Marquis de Simeuse, "is it true that you tried to kill Malin?"

"Yes, my lord Marquis. And when he comes back I will lie in wait for him again——"

"Do you know that we are suspected of setting you to watch for him? That our cousin, as she took you for her tenant, is accused of complicity in a plot against his life?"

"Good gracious!" cried Michu. "There must be a curse hanging over me. Am I never to rid you quietly of Malin?"

"No, no, my boy," said Paul Marie. "You must leave our service and the neighborhood. We will watch over your in-

terests and put you in the way of prospering. Sell all that you have here, realize everything, and we will send you to Trieste. We have a friend there who has very large business connections; you will be very useful to him, until things improve here for us all."

The tears came into Michu's eyes; he stood glued to the spot on the polished floor.

"Did any one see you when you lay in wait for Malin?" asked the Marquis de Chargebœuf.

"Grévin, the notary, was talking with him, or I should have shot him, and very lucky it was that I did not, as Madame la Comtesse knows," he added, looking at his mistress.

The Marquis de Chargebœuf seemed to be put out by all this questioning, although it was conducted by the family among themselves. "Is this Grévin the only person who knows of it?" he asked.

"That spy who came down at the time to trap the masters knew about it too."

M. Chargebœuf got up and went to the window, as if he were interested in the gardens.

"You have made great improvements here at Cinq-Cygne, have you not?" he said; and he went out, followed by Laurence and the Simeuses, who understood the meaning of the inquiry.

Outside, the old noble turned to them.

"You are open-natured and generous," he said, "but rash as ever. I give you warning of a rumor, *which must be a slander,* nothing more natural; and you proceed to prove that it is well founded before weak-minded folk like Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre and their sons.—Oh! you young people! you young people!—You should leave Michu here," he continued; "it is you, *you* who ought to go! But at any rate, if you stop in the neighborhood, write a few lines to the Senator, tell him that you have just heard through me of the rumors current about your servant, and that he has had notice given him."

"*We!*" cried the brothers. "Are we to write to Malin who

murdered our father and mother, and impudently robbed us of our estates?"

"That is all true; but he is one of the greatest personages at the Imperial court, and a king in the Aube."

"Malin that voted for the King's death if the Army of Condé should enter France, and otherwise for perpetual imprisonment!" exclaimed Laurence.

"And probably advised the death of the Duc d'Enghien," exclaimed Paul Marie.

"Oh! well, if you have a mind to recapitulate all his titles to nobility," exclaimed the Marquis, "say that he pulled down Robespierre by the skirts of his coat as soon as he saw that the majority were for getting rid of Robespierre; he would have had Bonaparte taken out and shot if the 18th Brumaire had failed; he would bring back the Bourbons if Napoleon should totter. The strongest will always find Malin at his side, with a sword or a pistol ready so that he can rid himself at once of any formidable antagonist!—But so much the more reason."

"We are sinking very low," said Laurence.

The old Marquis led them further away to a strip of grass-plot covered with a light sprinkling of snow.

"Ah! you children, you will fly into indignation when you hear a wise man's advice; but it is my duty to give it. This is what I should do. I would take some old gentleman (like myself, for instance) as mediator. I would authorize him to make Malin an offer—a million of francs for a ratification of the sale of Gondreville. . . . Oh! keep the thing quiet, he would agree to it. Then as the funds stand now you would have a hundred thousand francs per annum, you could buy a fine estate somewhere else in France, leave M. d'Hauteserre as steward of Cinq-Cygne, and pull straws to decide which of you shall marry our fair heiress here. But an old man's talk in young ears is like young people's talk for old folk—sound with no meaning in it."

He signified that he wished to hear no reply and returned to the salon, the Abbé Goujet and his sister having meantime

arrived. The Simeuses were indignant at the proposal that they should pull straws for their cousin, and Laurence was, so to speak, disgusted by the unpalatable remedy pointed out by their relative. The three were courteous, but less gracious than before. Affection had received a shock. M. de Chargebœuf felt the coolness, he looked again and again at the three charming faces, and his eyes were full of compassion. The conversation became general, but he still talked of the necessity of accepting the situation, and vaunted M. d'Hauteserre's persistent wish, to see his sons in the Emperor's army.

"Bonaparte creates dukes," he said, "and fiefs of the Empire; some day he will create counts. Malin would like to be Comte de Gondreville.—There is an idea which you may find useful," he added, looking as he spoke at the Simeuses.

"Or disastrous," said Laurence.

The horses were put in, the Marquis rose at once to go, followed by the whole family. He beckoned to Laurence when he was seated; she sprang, light as a bird, to the carriage step.

"You are not an ordinary woman," he said, lowering his voice for her ear; "you should understand me. Malin cannot let you alone; his conscience is uneasy; he will lay some sort of trap for you. Whatever you do, be very careful even of your slightest actions. Compound the matter, in short, that is my last word to you."

The brothers stood passive and motionless beside Laurence on the lawn, watching the *berlingot* as it turned through the gate and rolled away on the road to Troyes; Laurence had repeated the old gentleman's last words to them. It is always a mistake on the part of age and experience to come upon the scene in a *berlingot,* with a pair of striped stockings and a bag-wig. Not one of the three young creatures could conceive the changes that were taking place in France. Every nerve in them was quivering with indignation; honor like their noble blood was boiling in their veins.

"And he is the head of the Chargebœufs!" said the Marquis de Simeuse, "a man with the words *Adsit fortior* for his motto, one of the grandest of all war-cries!"

"There is only the *bœuf* left; it is a bovine metamorphosis," said Laurence, with a bitter smile.

"The age of St. Louis is past!" cried the younger of the Simeuses.

"'To DIE SINGING!'" Laurence exclaimed. "The cry of the five maids who founded our house shall be mine!"

"And our motto is CY MEURS. So no surrender," added the elder brother, "for when you come to think over it our relative the Ox ruminated very sagaciously over what he came to say to us. Gondreville will sooner or later be Malin's name."

"And residence!" exclaimed Marie Paul.

"Mansard designed it for nobles, and the people would bring up their broods in it," said his brother.

"If it is to be so, I would rather see Gondreville burnt," Laurence burst out.

A man from the village had come to take a look at a calf that old d'Hauteserre was selling him; he came out of the cow-shed at that moment and heard the words.

"Let us go back to the house," said Laurence, with a smile; "a little more and we should have done something imprudent, and made good the prophecy of the Ox, over a bargain for a calf."

"Michu, my poor fellow, I had forgotten about your prank," she said, as she returned to the salon; "but we are not in the odor of sanctity hereabouts, so do not get us into trouble. Have you any other peccadillo on your conscience?"

"I am sorry that I did not kill my old master's murderer before I hurried to the rescue of my present masters."

"Michu!" cried the curé.

"But I am not going to leave the neighborhood until I know that you are safe," he continued, taking no notice of the exclamation. "I see fellows prowling about and I don't altogether like the looks of them. The last time that we were out shooting in the forest, that gamekeeper kind of fellow that they have taken on in my place in Gondreville came up to me and asked me if we thought we were at home there.

'Ah! my boy,' I told him, 'it is not easy to break yourself of a habit in two months when it is a thing that has been done for two hundred years.' "

"You are in the wrong, Michu," said the Marquis de Simeuse, with a pleased smile.

"What did he say?" asked M. d'Hauteserre.

"He said that he should let the Senator know of our pretensions."

"The Comte de Gondreville!" cried the elder Simeuse. "Ah! a fine farce! By the by, they say 'your Majesty' to Bonaparte."

"And 'your Highness' to my lord the Grand Duke of Berg," added the curé.

"Who may he be?" asked M. de Simeuse.

"Murat, Napoleon's brother-in-law," said old d'Hauteserre.

"Good!" was Laurence's comment. "And do they say 'your Majesty' to the Marquis de Beauharnais' widow?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"We ought to go to Paris to see all this!" cried Laurence.

"Alas, mademoiselle," said Michu, "I went to Paris to take François to school, and upon my word there is no trying on any nonsense with the Imperial Guard, as they call them. If the whole army is cut out on that pattern, it may last our time and longer."

"They talk of noble families that are entering the service," said M. d'Hauteserre.

"And as the law stands at present, your children will be bound to serve," rejoined the curé.

"The law recognizes no distinctions of rank or name, now."

"That man is doing us more damage with his court, than the Revolution did with the axe!" exclaimed Laurence.

"The Church prays for him," put in the curé.

All these things that were said, one after another, were like so many commentaries on the old Marquis de Chargebœuf's wise words; but the young people had too much confidence, too strong a sense of honor to accept a compromise. They said among themselves what every defeated party has

said since the world began, to wit, that there would be an end of the prosperity of the victorious side. The Emperor was kept in his place entirely by the army; sooner or later the right would triumph, and so forth, and so forth; and thus, in spite of warnings, they fell into the pit that was digged before them, while prudent and docile folk, like old d'Hauteserre, would have avoided it. If people would be honest, they would perhaps admit that misfortunes never burst upon them without some warning beforehand, either from without or within; but there are many who only recognize the profound significance of the portent, mysterious or otherwise, after the calamity has befallen them.

"In any case, Madame la Comtesse knows that I cannot leave the place until I have sent in my accounts," Michu whispered to Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne.

For all answer she gave him a look, and he went. Michu sold his land at once to Beauvisage, the tenant of Bellache, but he could not receive payment for nearly three weeks. Laurence, meanwhile, had told her cousins of their fortune hidden in the forest; and so, just a month after the Marquis' visit, she suggested that they should unearth the hoard on the mid-Lent holiday. But for heavy falls of snow, it would have been dug up before; but Michu was better pleased that his masters should be present on the occasion. He had quite made up his mind to leave the place; he could not trust himself.

"Malin has come down to Gondreville quite suddenly, no one knows why," he told his mistress; "and the thought of having Gondreville put up for sale in consequence of the owner's decease, would be too much for me. I feel like a guilty man, when I do not act on the inspiration."

"What can have induced him to leave Paris in the depth of winter?"

"All Arcis is talking about it," said Michu; "he left his family in Paris and brought down no one but his own man. M. Grévin, the Arcis notary, and Madame Marion, the receiver-general's wife (sister-in-law of the other Marion, Malin's stalking-horse), are keeping him company."

Laurence thought the mid-Lent holiday a capital day for their purpose, for it gave her an excuse for ridding herself of the servants. The masqueraders in the town attracted the peasants; and no one would be working in the fields. But as so often happens in criminal affairs, it was precisely the choice of the day that helped to bring about the disaster. Fate was as ingenious in her calculations as Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. The young people held a council, decided that Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre would be so anxious if they knew that a hoard of eleven hundred thousand francs in gold was buried on the outskirts of a forest, that they concluded to spare them the knowledge. The young d'Hauteserres, consulted on the point, were of the same opinion. The secret of the expedition was confined to the four nobles, Gothard, Michu, and Laurence herself.

After much calculation it seemed possible that each horse could carry a load of forty-eight thousand francs in a long bag over the crupper. Three journeys would be enough. It was agreed that the servants' curiosity might prove dangerous, so they were all sent off to Troyes to see the mid-Lent rejoicings. Catherine, Marthe, and Durieu, who might be trusted, stayed at the château. The servants very willingly accepted their holiday and went before daybreak. Gothard, with Michu's help, rubbed down the horses and saddled them early in the morning; the cavalcade went round by way of the gardens, and there they started for the forest. They were just mounting (for the park gate was so low that every one had gone in on foot, each leading his horse) when old Beauvisage, the tenant of Bellache, came by.

"Hullo!" cried Gothard, "here comes somebody——"

"Oh, it is I!" said the honest farmer, coming out upon them. "Good-day, gentlemen. So you are going a-hunting in spite of the Prefect's orders. I am not one to complain, but take care! If you have friends, you have plenty of enemies."

"Aha!" returned the burly d'Hauteserre, with a smile. "God send success to our hunting, and you shall have your masters back again."

At these words, on which events were to put a very different construction, Laurence looked sternly at Robert. The Marquis de Simeuse imagined that Malin would give up Gondreville if the purchase-money was returned to him. The Marquis de Chargebœuf had advised the exactly opposite course. Robert, sharing the young people's hopes, had them in his mind when he uttered these fatal words.

"In any case, mum's the word, old boy," Michu said to Beauvisage, as he took the key and followed the others.

It was one of those bright days toward the end of March, when there is no dampness in the air; when the ground is dry, the weather cloudless, and the warmth seems curiously at variance with the leafless trees. So mild was the weather that there were patches of green here and there in the country as they went.

"We are setting out to look for treasure, and all the while you are the real prize of our house, cousin," laughed the elder of the Simeuses. Laurence went at a footpace ahead of the others, with a cousin on either side. The two d'Hauteserres came next, and Michu brought up the rear. Gothard had been sent on in front to look out along the way.

"If our fortune, a part of it at least, is to be found again, marry my brother," said the younger of the twins in a low voice. "He idolizes you; you would be as rich as the nobles of these days are obliged to be."

"No. Leave the money to him, and I will marry you, since I am rich enough for two," returned she.

"So let it be!" cried the Marquis de Simeuse. "And I will go to find a wife worthy to be your sister."

"Then you love me less than I thought," said Laurence, looking at him jealously.

"No; I love you both more than you love me," retorted the Marquis.

"And for that reason you would sacrifice yourself?" asked Laurence, with eyes full of the momentary preference. The Marquis made no reply. His silence drew an impatient gesture from her.

"Very well," she said; "in that case I should think of you always, and my husband would find that intolerable."

"How could I live without you?" exclaimed the younger brother, looking at the older.

"Still, you cannot take us both," said the Marquis. "And it is time to make a decision," he added, his tone abrupt with deep feeling. And he pushed on ahead lest the d'Hauteserres should hear. His companions' horses followed. When they had put a reasonable interval between themselves and the rest of the party, Laurence tried to speak, but at first tears came and no words.

"I will go into a convent," she said at last.

"And be the last of the Cinq-Cygnes?" asked the younger Simeuse. "Then instead of one unhappy man who consents to his lot, you would have two? Nay. The one who can only be a brother to you will resign himself to his fate. When we knew that we were not to be so poor as we thought, we had an explanation," he added, looking at the Marquis. "If I am preferred, this fortune of ours goes to my brother. If I am the unhappy one, he will make over the fortune to me, and the title as well, for he will be the Comte de Cinq-Cygne. Whichever way it happens, the unlucky brother will have a chance of an establishment. And finally, if he feels that he is heartbroken, he will go into the army to be killed without casting a shadow on the other two."

"We are true knights of the Middle Ages; we are worthy of our sires!" cried Paul Marie. "Decide, Laurence!"

"We cannot go on like this any longer," added the younger.

"And, Laurence," added the elder, "do not think that there will be no luxury in self-sacrifice."

"My two dearly loved ones, I cannot decide. I love you both as if you were one; as you loved your mother. God will help us. I shall not make the choice. We will leave chance to decide, and I have one condition to make."

"What is it?"

"That the one that shall be my brother afterwards shall stay till I give him leave to go. I wish to be the sole judge of the expediency of his going."

The brothers agreed to this, though they did not understand what was in her mind.

"The first to whom Madame d'Hauteserre shall address a word to-night at dinner, after the *Benedicite,* shall be my husband," continued Laurence. "But there must be no tricks; none of you are to prompt her to ask a question."

"We will play fairly," said Marie Paul, and they kissed Laurence's hand. The decision would soon be made; each of the brothers could believe that it would be in his favor, and their spirits rose high.

"However it is, Laurence dear, you will make a Comte de Cinq-Cygne," said the elder.

"And in our game the one who wins will lose his name," added the younger Simeuse.

"I think, at this rate, that Madame la Comtesse will be a bride before long," said Michu, behind the d'Hauteserres. "The masters are in great spirits. If my mistress makes her choice, I shall stay on. I want to see that wedding."

Neither of the d'Hauteserres answered a word. Quite suddenly a single magpie lighted down between the d'Hauteserres and Michu. Like all children of the soil, Michu was superstitious; it seemed to him that he heard the death-bell tolling. But for the other three the day began gaily enough; when lovers go together through a wood they very seldom see magpies. Michu had brought his map, and found the spot; each of the gentlemen was provided with a pick, and the money was unearthed. The hiding-place was in a lonely spot in the forest, far from any path or human dwelling, and the cavalcade met no one, which was unfortunate; for, grown bold with success, they took a short cut on the journey for the last two hundred thousand francs. The road went past the highest point of the forest, from which you could see the park at Gondreville.

"There is a fire!" exclaimed Laurence, seeing a column of bluish smoke.

"A bonfire somewhere or other," said Michu.

Laurence knew every track and path in the woods; she left

the party and rode at full gallop to the Cinq-Cygne lodge, Michu's old home. The house was empty and shut up, but the gate stood open, and Laurence noticed at once the tracks of several horses. The smoke was rising from a grassy space in the "English park." They must be burning weeds, she thought.

"Ah! you are in it too, mademoiselle!" cried a voice. It was Violette. The man had come at a gallop down the way from the park, and now pulled up at the sight of Laurence. "But it is only a carnival joke, isn't it? They are not going to kill him, are they?"

"Whom?"

"Your cousins don't mean to kill him."

"Kill? Whom?"

"The Senator."

"You are mad, Violette!"

"Well then, what are you doing here?" retorted he. But at the first mention of danger for her cousins, the gallant girl turned and rode back at full speed, and reached the spot just as the last loads were ready.

"Look out! Something is happening, I don't know what. But let us go back to Cinq-Cygne."

While they had been busy unearthing the fortune saved by the late Marquis, a strange scene had taken place at the château de Gondreville.

At half-past two that afternoon the Senator and his friend Grévin were playing a game of chess beside the fire in the great salon on the ground floor. Madame Marion and Madame Grévin were chatting together on a sofa drawn up to the fireside. The servants had all gone over to Troyes to see a curious masquerade long advertised in the arrondissement. The keeper, Michu's successor at the Cinq-Cygne lodge, had likewise gone with his family. The only people in the château, besides the group in the salon, were the Senator's own man and Violette. The gate-keeper and a couple of gardeners were at their posts, but the lodge stood at the entrance to the drive at the further end of the Arcis avenue,

at such a distance that you could not hear a shot fired at the château. On this particular afternoon, moreover, the folk were all on the other side of the house, watching on the threshold in the hope of seeing the mummers come from Arcis, more than a mile away.

Violette was waiting in the great entrance hall for an interview with the Senator and Grévin as to the renewal of his lease, when five men, wearing masks and gloves, burst in upon Violette and the man-servant, gagged them with pocket-handkerchiefs, and tied them down to two chairs in the pantry. Four of the intruders resembled the MM. d'Hauteserre and Simeuse in figure, manners, and gait; the fifth man was like Michu. Quick as they had been about their work, both the victims continued to cry out, and the cry was heard by the party in the drawing-room. The women insisted that it was a cry of alarm.

"Listen!" exclaimed Madame Grévin; "there are thieves in the house!"

"Pooh, some carnival cry," said Grévin; "the mummers are coming to the château."

The dispute gave the five masked intruders time to shut the gates on the side of the great courtyard, and to lock Violette and the man-servant into the pantry. Madame Grévin, a tolerably self-willed lady, persisted in going out to learn the cause of the sound. She fell in with the five masks, and met with the fate of Violette and the man-servant. This done, they burst into the salon, the two strongest grappled with the Comte de Gondreville, gagged him and hurried him off across the park, while the other three, having gagged Madame Marion and the notary, bound them down, each in an armchair. The whole thing was over and done in less than half an hour. The two came back to join the others, and then began a thorough search through the château from garret to cellar. Not a single lock was picked, but every cupboard was opened, and every wall was sounded; the place was at their mercy, in short, till five o'clock that evening. About that time the man-servant succeeded in gnawing through the cords

that bound Violette. Violette, now ungagged, raised the alarm. At the sound of his shouts the five strangers made off across the gardens, mounted horses like those ridden by the Cinq-Cygnes, and escaped, but not so nimbly but that Violette saw them. Violette unbound the man-servant and left him to look after the women and the notary, while he himself bestrode his nag and rode off after the miscreants. When he reached the Cinq-Cygne lodge, to his unspeakable amazement he saw the gate standing wide open, and Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, as he supposed, on sentry duty.

The young Countess was away out of sight when Grévin rode up with the rural policeman of the commune of Gondreville, the gate-keeper having found him a mount in the stables, while the gate-keeper's wife went to give notice to the gendarmerie at Arcis. Violette forthwith spoke to Grévin of his meeting with Laurence, and her flight; the depth and decision of that fearless young woman's character was known to them both.

"She was on the lookout," added Violette.

"Is it possible that the Cinq-Cygne nobles can have made the attack?" cried Grévin.

"What!" returned Violette. "Did you not recognize big Michu? He sprang upon me. I felt the weight of his fist, I did. What is more, the horses certainly came out of the Cinq-Cygne stables."

Grévin looked round at the marks of horses' hoofs on the sand, and left the policeman at the gate to keep a watch over the precious footprints, sending Violette to fetch the justice of the peace from Arcis to verify them, while he himself rode back at once to the château de Gondreville and entered the drawing-room. The lieutenant and sub-lieutenant of the gendarmerie had come, with four men and a corporal.

The lieutenant, as might be expected, was the very corporal in whose head François had made a hole two years previously. Corentin had helped him to the name of his mischievous antagonist. This man's name was Giguet. His brother in the army became one of the foremost colonels in the artillery,

and he himself rose by his merit to his rank in the gendarmerie, and subsequently to the command of the Aube division.

The sub-lieutenant, Welff by name, was the man who had served in Egypt. He drove Corentin from Cinq-Cygne to the hunting lodge, and thence to Troyes; and sufficiently edifying tales he heard, by the way, of the "trickery" of Laurence and Michu, as Corentin was pleased to call it.

Consequently, both Giguet and Welff were sure to display no little zeal against the Cinq-Cygnes. Malin and Grévin had both been employed on the Code of Brumaire of the year IV., the work promulgated by the, so-called, National Convention under the Directory; and they had worked together. Grévin, knowing this piece of legislation to the bottom, was able to work the present affair with incredible speed, on the presumption almost amounting to a certainty that Michu, the d'Hauteserres, and the Simeuses were guilty. Scarcely any one now living, save an old magistrate here and there, can recollect the old judicial organization overturned by Napoleon about that very time by the promulgation of his Code, and the institution of the present system.

By the Code of Brumaire of the year IV. the conduct of the prosecution of the misdemeanor committed at Gondreville was entirely in the hands of the Director of the Jury in the department. Remark, by the way, that the Convention struck the word "crime" out of the dictionary of legal terms, and admitted nothing but misdemeanors: misdemeanors against the law, misdemeanors punishable as the case may be by fine, imprisonment, or disgrace, while a fourth series of penalties known as "corporal punishments" included death. The "corporal punishment" of death, however, was destined to be commuted after the Peace to twenty-four years of penal servitude. The Convention, it would seem, held that twenty-four years in a convicts' prison is equivalent to death; what is to be said of the Code Pénal with its "penal servitude in perpetuity"?

The Code Napoléon, even then in process of completion, suppressed the Directors of the Jury altogether, because such

enormous powers were united in their hands. So far as the conduct of the prosecution, and the drawing up of the indictment was concerned, a Director of the Jury was in some sort the agent of the judicial police, the public prosecutor, examining magistrate, and court of appeal, all in one. There was, however, one check upon him: his procedure and indictment were submitted to the commissary of the executive power for his *visa;* and all the facts taken down in examination were laid before a jury of eight, who heard the accused and the witnesses, and finally brought in a preliminary verdict, called the *verdict d'accusation.* As this jury, however, met in the Director's private office, that functionary was pretty certain so to bring his influence to bear upon them that they could only work with and not against him. So much for the *jury d'accusation.* The second jury present in court during the actual trial of the accused, was composed of entirely new names, and called the *jury de jugement* by way of distinction from the first.

As for the Criminal Tribunal (re-named the Criminal Court by Napoleon), it consisted of a president, four judges, a public accuser, and a commissary representing the Government. Still between 1799 and 1806 there were Special Courts, as they were called, empowered to try without a jury, in certain cases and in certain departments; and these Special Courts consisted of judges from the Civil Tribunal. The conflict between special and criminal justice raised questions as to competence which were sent up to the Court of Cassation. If there had been a special court in the Aube, a case of an attempt on the life or liberty of an Imperial Senator would no doubt have gone up before it; but in that quiet department there was no provision for exceptional cases. So Grévin sent off the sub-lieutenant to the Director of the Jury at Troyes. The man that had served in Egypt galloped off post haste to Gondreville, and came back with that all but omnipotent functionary.

The Director of the Jury at Troyes, Lechesneau by name, had formerly been lieutenant of the bailiwick, and a salaried clerk of a committee of the Convention. He was a friend

of Malin's and owed his appointment to him. As an experienced practitioner of the old criminal law, he as well as Grévin had been of great use to Malin in his judicial reforms under the Convention. For which reason Malin had recommended him to Cambacérès, and Lechesneau was appointed a receiver-general of taxes in Italy. Unluckily for his prospects, however, he became involved in an intrigue with a great lady at Turin; her husband threatened to prosecute for the abduction of a child born in adultery, and Napoleon was obliged to cashier the official. Lechesneau, lying under such obligations to Malin, guessed the importance of the attempt, and came over with a picket of twelve gendarmes and a captain.

Before setting out, he naturally asked for an interview with the Prefect. Night was falling, the semaphore was not available, but an estafette was despatched to Paris to report such an unheard-of crime to the Minister of Police, the Chief Justiciary, and the Emperor.

Mesdames Marion and Grévin, Violette, and the Senator's man, with the justice of the peace and his clerks, were all in the drawing-room when Lechesneau came in. The house had already been searched, and the justice of the peace, with Grévin's assistance, was carefully collecting the evidence. The first thing that struck Lechesneau was the profound scheming revealed in the choice of the day and the hour. It was too late to set about seeking circumstantial evidence. At that time of year it is almost dark at five o'clock. Violette had not been able to start sooner in pursuit of the delinquents, and night often means impunity for evil-doers. To choose a holiday when everybody was sure to go to see the masquerade at Arcis, and the Senator equally certain to be at home—did not this insure that there should be no witnesses?

"Let us do justice to the clear-sightedness of the agents of the prefecture of police," said Lechesneau. "They have continually warned us against the nobles of Cinq-Cygne, and told us that sooner or later they would play us some ugly trick or other."

The Prefect of the Aube, meanwhile, was sending estafettes to all the prefectures round about Troyes, with instructions to search for traces of the five masks and the Senator. Lechesneau, feeling sure that the Prefect would take active measures, began by laying down the basis of the legal inquiry. With two such experts as Grévin and the justice of the peace, the work went rapidly forward. The justice of the peace, one Pigoult by name, had been at one time head clerk in the solicitors' office in which Malin and Grévin studied chicanery at Paris. Three months after this affair he was appointed president of the tribunal at Arcis.

As for Michu, Lechesneau knew that he had previously threatened Marion, and knew likewise about the Senator's escape that day in the park. These two facts, the one a consequence of the other, were to constitute the first two counts on the present indictment; they pointed to Michu as the ringleader of the band, and this the more unmistakably since Monsieur and Madame Grévin, Violette, and Madame Marion declared that one of the five masks was exactly like the bailiff. Indeed, the color of his hair, the man's whiskers, and thick-set build made a disguise pretty nearly useless. Who but Michu, besides, could have opened the gates of the Cinq-Cygne lodge with a key? The keeper and his wife, questioned on their return from Arcis, deposed that they had locked both gates before they went; and when the gates were examined by the justice of the peace, assisted by his clerk and the rural policeman, there was no sign of a forcible entrance.

"He must have kept the duplicate keys belonging to the château, when we turned him out," said Grévin. "And he must have been meditating some desperate step," he added, "for he has just sold his land. The purchase was to be completed in twenty days, and the money was paid over the day before yesterday in my office."

"They will have arranged to throw all the blame on him," exclaimed Lechesneau, struck by this circumstance. "He has appeared as their instrument."

Who could know their way about the château better than

the Simeuses and d'Hauteserres? Not one of the attacking party had made any mistake; they had gone straight to the point in a way which showed that they knew quite well what they wanted, and where to find it. None of the locks of the cupboards that they left open had been forced. Therefore they had keys. And strange to say they had not made the slightest disorder. There was no question of theft. Finally, Violette had not merely recognized the horses; he had actually seen the Countess on the watch at the Cinq-Cygne gate. All these facts, taken together with the depositions, afforded strong presumption of guilt against the Simeuses, and d'Hauteserres, and Michu, even for an unprejudiced tribunal; in the mind of the Director of the Jury, the presumption of guilt degenerated into certainty.

Now what should they want with the future Comte de Gondreville? To compel him to give up the estate? It was known that so far back as 1799 the bailiff had said that he had the money ready. The whole aspect of the case was changed at once.

Then Lechesneau asked himself what the object of that diligent search through the château could have been. Revenge was out of the question; the delinquents would have killed Malin outright. Yet, how if the Senator was actually dead and buried? And yet, as he had been kidnapped, he was probably under restraint. Why keep Malin under lock and key after the search had been carried out at the château? Clearly it were folly to suppose that a dignitary of the Empire could be kidnapped and the affair kept a secret for long. The news would spread so swiftly that any possible advantage to be gained by secrecy would soon be at an end.

To these objections, Pigoult replied that justice could never fathom all the motives in the minds of scoundrels. There were points that were never cleared up between the examining magistrate and the criminal; there were depths of conscience in which no human power could throw a light, unless the guilty man chose to confess.

Grévin and Lechesneau nodded assent to this, but none the

less their eyes pored on the darkness through which they were anxious to see.

"And the Emperor pardoned them too!" continued Pigoult, turning to Grévin and Madame Marion. "He struck their names out of the List, though they were mixed up in the last plot against him."

Without further delay, Lechesneau sent off all his force of gendarmerie to the forest and the Cinq-Cygne valley. The justice of the peace was despatched with Giguet, who became, in the terms of the Code, his auxiliary officer of police. The justice's instructions were to collect evidence for the prosecution in the commune of Cinq-Cygne, and to proceed, if necessary, to make all preliminary inquiries. To save time, Lechesneau hurriedly dictated and signed a warrant for Michu's apprehension, in case the facts bore out the case against him. Then, so soon as the gendarmes and the justice had started off, Lechesneau went back to the important work of issuing warrants against the Simeuses and d'Hauteserres, the Code requiring that all the charges against the delinquents should be enumerated in the documents.

Giguet and the justice of the peace came down upon Cinq Cygne so quickly that they fell in with the servants returning home from Troyes, arrested them, and took them before the mayor. When questioned, they answered in all simplicity, without a suspicion of the importance of the answer, that permission had been given to them yesterday to spend the whole day at Troyes. In answer to the justice of the peace, they all made answer alike that they had not asked for the holiday; Mademoiselle had offered it to them.

The judge thought these depositions so important that he sent Giguet back to Gondreville to ask Lechesneau to come over himself to be present at the arrest of the nobles at Cinq-Cygne, while he proceeded to the farm-house to take the supposed ringleader, Michu, by surprise, so that all the arrests might be made simultaneously. So decisive did these new elements in the case appear that Lechesneau started out at once, with a parting caution to Grévin to keep a strict watch over the prints left by the horses' hoofs in the park.

Lechesneau, Director of the Jury, knew what satisfaction would be felt in Troyes with his proceedings against the *ci-devants,* the "enemies of the people," now become the Emperor's enemies. In such circumstances, a magistrate readily takes mere presumptions for evident proofs. Nevertheless, as Lechesneau drove from Gondreville to Cinq-Cygne, in the Senator's own carriage, it seemed to him that such audacity on the part of Michu and the young people was giddy to the last degree, and scarcely what might have been expected of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's intelligence. Lechesneau certainly would have risen high in his profession but for the weakness which brought him into disgrace in a fit of prudishness on the part of the Emperor. He thought within himself that there was something more in the abduction of a Senator than an attempt to extort a renunciation of Gondreville.

In every occupation—even in criminal investigation—there is something which may be called the professional conscience. Lechesneau's present perplexity arose out of that conscientiousness with which a man sets about any work that he loves, be he artist, man of science, or magistrate. For which very reason, the accused is probably safer with a judge than with a jury; a magistrate is suspicious of everything but reasoning, whereas a jury is apt to be carried away by fluctuations of sentiment. Lechesneau propounded several questions to himself, with a view to getting some satisfactory solution of them by the arrests.

Though all Troyes knew already that Senator Malin had been kidnapped, the news had not reached Arcis by eight o'clock; everybody was at supper when the gendarmerie and the justice were sent for; and as for the valley of Cinq-Cygne, it was impossible that any one there should have heard of it.

And so the château was again surrounded by gendarmes. This time, however, it was not on a political, but a criminal charge; and the compromise that it is sometimes possible to arrange with the one department is quite impossible with the other.

Laurence had only to tell Marthe, Catherine, and la Durieu to stay in the château and neither to go out nor to look out of the windows; they obeyed her to the letter. The horses had been brought as far as the hollow lane opposite the breach in the fosse. Robert and Michu, the strongest of the group, had contrived to carry the bags quietly down through the gap into a cellar under the stairs in the tower called Mademoiselle's Tower. The last journey was made about half-past five, and Michu and the four gentlemen at once proceeded to bury the hoard. Laurence and the d'Hauteserres thought it expedient to wall up the cellar, and Michu with Gothard's help set about the work. Gothard was sent to the farm-house for some cement, left over when the new house was built, and Marthe went home to give him the bags in secret. Michu's new house was on the very knoll from which he saw the gendarmes' caps that November night, and the way to it lay along the hollow lane. Michu, being ravenously hungry, did his work so quickly that the place was walled up by half-past seven. He had sent Gothard for another bag of cement, and finding that he did not want it after all, he hurried home to stop the boy.

Even then they were lying in wait about the house; the rural policeman, the justice of the peace, and his clerk heard his footsteps and hid themselves till he was safely inside. Some way off he saw Gothard with the bag of cement on his shoulders, coming toward the château.

"It is done, boy," he shouted; "take that back, and come in and have supper with us."

Michu's brow was covered with perspiration, his clothes were soiled with cement and earth from the stones taken out of the breach; he was in great spirits as he came into the kitchen where Marthe and her mother had put the soup on the table and were waiting for him.

Just as Michu turned on the tap to wash his hands, the justice of the peace appeared with his clerk, and the policeman behind him.

"What do you want with us, M. Pigoult?" asked Michu.

"In the name of the Emperor and the law, I arrest you," returned the justice of the peace; and the three gendarmes came in, bringing Gothard with them. Marthe and her mother saw the metal rims of the gendarmes' caps and looked at each other in terror.

"Oh, pshaw! What for?" asked Michu, sitting down to the table.—"Give me my supper," he said to his wife, "I am starving."

The justice held out the warrant.

"You know why as well as we do," he said, beckoning to the clerk to come forward and draw up the report.

"Well, Gothard, what are you gaping at? Do you want your supper or do you not? Let them write down their rubbish," said Michu.

"Do you see the state of your clothes?" remarked the justice. "You cannot deny that any more than you can deny what you said to Gothard outside in the yard."

Michu's wife was amazed by his coolness. He ate voraciously and answered no questions; he had a clear conscience and his mouth was full. A dreadful misgiving took Gothard's appetite away.

"Look here," said the rural policeman, in Michu's ear. "What have you done with the Senator? From what they say, it is a matter of life and death for you."

"Oh! my God!" cried Marthe. She had overheard the last few words, and dropped down as if thunderstruck.

"Violette must have played us some ugly trick!" exclaimed Michu, recollecting Laurence's words.

"Oh! so you knew that Violette saw you?" said the justice.

Michu bit his lips and resolved to say not another word. Gothard followed his example. The justice saw that it was useless to try to extract a word from him, Michu's "contrariness" being well known in the countryside; so he ordered the men to tie his hands and Gothard's also, and to bring them to the château. Then he went to join the Director of the Jury.

Laurence and the rest of the party were so hungry, and dinner a matter of such extreme interest, that none of them

changed their dress, but went straight into the drawing-room, she in her habit, and the rest of the party in their white doeskin breeches and green jackets. Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre were both anxious enough. The old gentleman had noticed their comings and goings, to say nothing of their evident want of confidence in him, for Laurence could not issue instructions to the elder d'Hauteserres as to the rest of the household. So when one of his sons evaded his questions and took refuge in flight, he spoke to his wife.

"I am afraid Laurence has been cutting out some more work for us."

"What have you been hunting to-day?" asked Madame d'Hauteserre, turning to Laurence.

"Ah! some day you shall hear about the mischief that your children have been in," Laurence answered laughing.

She spoke jestingly, but the old lady shivered at the words. Catherine announced that dinner was ready. Laurence took M. d'Hauteserre's arm, smiling to herself at the mischievous trick that she had played her cousins, for one of them was bound to offer an arm to old Madame d'Hauteserre, their oracle by common consent.

The Marquis led Madame d'Hauteserre to her place. The *Benedicite* was said, and the situation grew so solemn that Laurence and her cousins could feel the violent throbbing of their hearts. Madame d'Hauteserre, as she helped them, was struck with the Simeuses' anxious expression and the agitation in Laurence's sheep-like countenance.

"Something unusual has happened!" exclaimed the lady, looking round at them.

"To whom do you speak?" asked Laurence.

"To all of you."

"For my own part, mother, I am as ravenous as a wolf," said Robert.

Madame d'Hauteserre, still troubled in her mind, handed the Marquis a plate which she meant for his younger brother.

"I am like your mother," she said, addressing him. "I continually make mistakes in spite of your cravats. I thought I was helping your brother."

"You have helped him better than you think for," said the younger Simeuse, turning pale. "He is the Comte de Cinq-Cygne."

He, poor boy, that had been so merry, was to be sadder now for the rest of his days; but he forced a smile as he looked at Laurence, and shut his lifelong regret within himself. In a moment the lover became the brother.

"What!" cried Madame d'Hauteserre, "has the Countess made her choice?"

"No," said Laurence. "We left fate to act for us, and you were the instrument."

She told the history of the morning's agreement, and while she spoke the Marquis, watching his brother's white face, longed to cry out, "Take her, and *I* will go away to die!"

Just as dessert was served, some one outside in the darkness tapped sharply at the dining-room window on the side of the garden. The elder d'Hauteserre opened it, and admitted the curé. His breeches had been torn on the park railings.

"Fly!" he cried. "They are coming to arrest you."

"Why?"

"I do not know that yet; but they are coming to take you into custody——"

There was a general outburst of laughter at this.

"We have done nothing!" the four young men cried out.

"Innocent or guilty, take horse for the frontier. When you are there you can establish your innocence. You may get over a condemnation for contempt of court, but there is no getting over a conviction obtained by popular clamor, a foregone conclusion from the first. Do you remember what Président de Harlay said?—'If I were accused of carrying off the towers of Notre Dame, the first thing I should do would be to run away.'"

"But if you run away, do you not acknowledge that you are guilty?" remonstrated the Marquis de Simeuse.

"Do not fly!" said Laurence.

"Heroic nonsense as usual," cried the curé, in desperation. "If I had God's power for a moment, I would carry you off.

But if they find me here in this state, they will turn my singular visit against you and me; I shall escape by the same way. Consider! There is still time. You are surrounded in all other directions, but they forgot the wall of the parsonage garden."

The curé, poor man, was scarcely gone before the courtyard rang with the clank of sabres and trampling horse hoofs; the Abbé Goujet's advice, it seemed, was to meet with no more success than the Marquis de Chargebœuf's.

The younger brother turned to Laurence. "Our common existence was out of the course of the laws of nature," he said, in a melancholy tone, "and our love is out of the ordinary course of nature, too. This abnormal thing has won your heart. Perhaps it is because natural laws are set aside, that all the stories of the lives of twins are so sad. You see in our own case how persistently fate dogs us. Here is your decision, fatally deferred."

Laurence, in a sort of stupor, heard the Director of the Jury speaking; the ominous words were droning in her ears.

"In the name of the Emperor and the law, I arrest the Sieurs Paul Marie and Marie Paul de Simeuse, Adrien and Robert d'Hauteserre!" He turned to the men with him and pointed out the splashes of mud on the clothes of the accused. "The gentlemen cannot deny that they have spent part of the day on horseback," he said.

"Of what do you accuse them?" Mademoiselle Cinq-Cygne asked haughtily.

"Do you not take mademoiselle into custody?" inquired Giguet.

"I will leave her out on bail, until the evidence against her has been examined more fully."

Goulard offered bail, simply asking the Countess to give her word of honor that she would not escape. Laurence crushed the sometime huntsman of the House of Simeuse with a glance so disdainful that she made a mortal enemy of the man. The tears stood in her eyes, tears of rage that reveal a hell of inward anguish. The four nobles exchanged

stern glances and stood passive. As for Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, in their terror lest Laurence and the young people had been deceiving them, they had sunk into a stupor which no words can describe. They had passed through so many fears for their children and won them back again, and now they sat glued to their armchairs, staring before them with unseeing eyes; listening, and hearing not a word.

"M. d'Hauteserre, is it necessary to ask you to go bail for me?" cried Laurence; the sound of her voice rang out shrill and heart-searching as the trumpet of doom on her old guardian's ears. He understood all. He brushed the tears from his eyes and replied faintly:

"Pardon me, Countess . . . you know that I am devoted to you, body and soul."

Lechesneau had been impressed at first by finding the delinquents quietly at dinner; but his first suspicions returned at the sight of Laurence's thoughtful look, and the dazed faces of the old people. Laurence was trying to guess the snare set for them.

"Gentlemen," Lechesneau said civilly, "you are too well bred to make useless resistance. Will you, all four of you, come with me to the stables? Your horses' shoes must be removed in your presence; they may prove your guilt or innocence in the trial, and will be of importance as evidence. Will you also come with us, mademoiselle?"

Lechesneau had sent for the Cinq-Cygne blacksmith and his boy as experts. While this operation was going forward in the stables, the justice of the peace brought Gothard and Michu to the château. The work of taking off the horseshoes, and sorting and marking them, so as to compare them with the prints left in the park, took some time. Nevertheless, on Pigoult's arrival, Lechesneau left the accused with the gendarmes, and went back to the dining-room to dictate the preliminary reports. Pigoult pointed out the state of Michu's clothes, and related the circumstances of the arrest.

"They must have murdered the Senator and plastered him up in a wall somewhere," concluded the justice of the peace.

"I am afraid so, now," replied Lechesneau. "Where did you get the cement?" he asked, turning to Gothard.

Gothard began to cry.

"He is scared of the law," said Michu. His eyes flashed fire; he looked like a lion caught in a net.

By this time the servants were released by the mayor, and came crowding into the ante-chamber to find Catherine and the Durieus crying together. From them they learned the importance of the admission they had made. Every question put by the Director of the Jury or Pigoult, Gothard answered with sobs. He sobbed so much, in fact, that something like an attack of convulsions came on, and frightened them, and they let him alone. The little rogue, when he saw that they were not watching, looked at Michu and smiled. Michu gave him an approving glance. Lechesneau left Pigoult, and went out to hurry his experts.

There was a pause, then Madame d'Hauteserre at last turned to Pigoult. "Can you explain the reason of the arrest, monsieur?" she asked.

"The gentlemen are accused of carrying off the Senator by main force, and of illegally detaining him in confinement; for, in spite of appearances, we do not go so far as to suppose that they have taken his life."

"And what penalty is incurred by such a crime?" asked old d'Hauteserre.

"Well, since the laws not invalidated by the Code still remain in force, the penalty is death," replied the justice of the peace.

"Death!" cried Madame d'Hauteserre, and she fainted away. At this moment the curé appeared with his sister. Mademoiselle Goujet called Catherine and la Durieu.

"We have not so much as seen your damned Senator!" roared Michu.

"Madame Marion, Madame Grévin, M. Grévin, the Senator's own man, and Violette cannot say as much for you," returned Pigoult, with a sour smile of magisterial conviction.

"I can make nothing of this," said Michu. The answer

stupefied him. Now, for the first time, he began to think that he and his masters had been entangled in some plot woven to take them.

Just at that moment the party returned from the stables. Laurence hurried to Madame d'Hauteserre, and that lady recovered consciousness to say to her, "The penalty is death!"

"Death!" repeated Laurence, looking round at the four. The word spread a dismay, which Giguet, as Corentin's pupil, turned to advantage. He drew the Marquis de Simeuse to a corner of the dining-room. "It can all be arranged even yet," he said. "Perhaps it is only a joke. Why, confound it all, you have been in the army; between soldiers all is understood. What have you done with the Senator? If you have taken his life, there is no more to be said; but if you have imprisoned him somewhere, give him up. You can see yourself that the game is up. I am quite sure that the Director of the Jury will suppress the affair, and the Senator will cooperate."

"We cannot understand your questions in the very least," said the Marquis de Simeuse.

"If you take that tone, the thing will go far," returned the lieutenant.

The Marquis turned to Laurence.

"We are going to prison, dear cousin, but do not be anxious; we shall come back again in a few hours' time. There is some misapprehension; it will be cleared up."

"I wish it may, gentlemen, for your sake," said Pigoult, making a sign to Giguet to remove the four nobles with Gothard and Michu. "Do not take them to Troyes," he said to the lieutenant. "Keep them at the station at Arcis. They must be present to-morrow, with daylight, when the horseshoes are compared with the hoof-marks in the park."

Before Lechesneau and Pigoult went, they examined Catherine, Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, and Laurence. The Durieus, Marthe, and Catherine declared that they had not seen the family since breakfast. M. d'Hauteserre stated that he had seen them at three o'clock.

At midnight Laurence was left in the salon with Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, and the Abbé Goujet and his sister; the four young men who had brought life and love and joy to the château, were gone. For a long time she said no word, and no one ventured to break the silence. Never was grief deeper nor more complete. A sigh at last was heard; it came from Marthe, forgotten in a corner. She rose to her feet.

"Death! Madame. . . . They will just kill them, though they are innocent."

"What have you done?" said the curé. And Laurence rose and went without a word. She wanted to be alone to gather up her strength to meet this unforeseen disaster.

III.

A POLITICAL TRIAL IN THE TIME OF THE EMPIRE

At a distance of thirty-four years, in which great revolutions have taken place, none but elderly people can recollect the prodigious uproar made all over Europe when a Senator of the Empire was kidnapped. The trial of the young men accused of the act roused an amount of interest and curiosity never equaled, save, perhaps, over the case of Trumeau (the tradesman of the Place Saint Michel); the Widow Morin, under the Empire; the Fualdès and Castaing cases under the Restoration; or the trials of Madame Lafarge and Fieschi under the present Government. Such an attack on a member of the Senate brought down the Emperor's wrath; and the tidings of the arrest of the delinquents followed hard upon the news of the misdemeanor and the negative results of inquiries. The forest had been searched far and wide; they had gone all over the Aube and the neighboring departments, and not the slightest trace of their passage, not a single clue to the Comte de Gondreville's place of detention could be found. The Minister of Justice came at a summons from the Emperor (after obtaining information from the police department), and explained the relative positions of Malin and the Simeuses for Napoleon's benefit; and his Majesty, much preoccupied at the time with weighty matters, was inclined to find a solution of the affair in the antecedent facts.

"The young men must be mad," he said. "A jurisconsult like Malin is sure to disavow any document extorted from him by violence. Keep a watch over these nobles, and find out how they set about the release of the Comte de Gondreville." The Emperor bade them proceed as quickly as possible in

dealing with what he regarded, in the first place, as an attack upon his institutions; a fatal example of refusal to acquiesce in the changes brought about by the Revolution; an attempt to open up the great question of the National lands, and an obstacle in the way of that fusion of parties which had come to be the fixed idea of his home policy. He thought, in fact, that he had been tricked by the men who gave their promise to live quietly.

"Fouché's prophecy is fulfilled," he said, remembering the words let fall two years ago by his present Minister of Police. But Fouché had spoken at the time under the influence of the impression left on his mind by Corentin's report of Laurence.

It is difficult under a constitutional government, when nobody takes any interest in a blind, deaf, indifferent, and thankless State, to understand the impetus that a word from the Emperor gave to his administrative machinery. That powerful will of his seemed to compel other things beside men. The word spoken, the Emperor forgot the affair. The Coalition of 1806 took him by surprise. He was thinking of fresh battles to fight; his mind was taken up with massing his regiments so as to strike a final blow at the very heart of the Prussian monarchy; but his desire to see prompt justice done, found a response in the mind of every magistrate in the Empire. They saw themselves in a precarious position. Cambacérès, in his quality of Archchancellor, and Régnier, the Minister of Justice, were even then drawing up a scheme of Tribunals of First Instances, Imperial Courts, and Courts of Cassation. They were discussing questions of custom right, to which Napoleon justly attached so much importance; they were seeking out traces of the *parlements* done away with at the Revolution, and revising the lists of clerks and officials. Naturally, therefore, the magistrates in the department of the Aube thought that any proof of zeal in the affair of the kidnapping of the Comte de Gondreville would be an excellent recommendation. And Napoleon's supposition forthwith became a certainty for courtiers of power and the mass of the nation.

Peace still prevailed on the continent of Europe, and in France people were unanimous in admiration of the Emperor; he cajoled men through their interests and vanity, he coaxed, flattered, and conciliated individuals and public bodies, and everything else, even people's memories. Consequently everybody looked upon a deed of violence as a design against the public good; and the unfortunate and guiltless gentlemen were covered with general opprobrium. A small minority of nobles, confined to their estates, deplored the affair among themselves, but none of them dared to open their mouths. How, indeed, was it possible to stem the outburst of public opinion? The bodies of the eleven men who fell in 1792, shot down from behind the window shutters of the Hôtel de Cinq-Cygne, were dragged from their graves, and the whole department flung them at the heads of the accused. The *émigrés* as a class would wax bold, it was feared, and intimidate the buyers of their property by forcible protests against unjust spoliation. The Simeuses and d'Hautcserres were considered to be brigands, robbers, and murderers; Michu's complicity was especially fatal. Every head that fell in the department during the Terror, had been cut off by Michu or his father-in-law; the most absurd stories were current about him, and the exasperation was so much the more lively because Malin had put nearly every functionary in the Aube into his place. Not a single generous voice was uplifted to contradict the public clamor. The unfortunate prisoners, in fact, had no legal means of combating prejudice; for while the Code of Brumaire of the year IV. submitted the indictment and the judgment to two separate juries, it did not provide the accused with that great guarantee, the right of appeal to the Court of Cassation if there is evidence to show that a trial will be unfairly conducted.

On the day after the arrests were made, the family and servants at Cinq-Cygne were summoned to give evidence before the *jury d'accusation*. Cinq-Cygne was left in the care of the tenant, under the supervision of the abbé and Mademoiselle Goujet, who took up their abode there. Mademoi-

selle de Cinq-Cygne and Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre went to stay in Durieu's little house in one of the great struggling suburbs that spread about the town of Troyes. Laurence saw with a contraction of the heart the fury of the populace, the hatred of the bourgeoisie, the hostility of the administration; it was all brought home to her in the many little incidents which always befall the relatives of the defendants in a trial held in a country town. Instead of encouraging or compassionate words, she heard conversations meant for her to hear; a dreadful, clamorous desire for vengeance. Demonstrations of hate took the place of the strict politeness and reserve required by the occasion; and most of all, she felt the isolation that any one feels in such a case, and so much the more keenly because adversity teaches distrust. Laurence had recovered all her strength. Her cousins' innocence was evident, she despised the crowd too much to be frightened by its silent disapproval. She kept up her companions' courage, thinking all the while of that battle, which to judge from the rapidity of the procedure, must very soon be fought out in the criminal court. But her courage was to sink after an unexpected blow.

In the midst of their troubles, and the turn of the popular feeling against them, just as the unhappy family seemed to be alone in a desert, one man suddenly grew great in Laurence's eyes, and showed all the nobleness of his character. This was the Marquis de Chargebœuf. The day after the *jury d'accusation* returned a true bill, when the indictment, with the formula *Oui, il y a lieu* written at the foot by the foreman of the jury, was sent up to the public accuser, and the warrant was converted into an order for the safe custody of the accused, the Marquis, in his old-fashioned calèche, came bravely to the rescue. Foreseeing that the course of justice was certain to be swift, the head of the house had hurried to Paris, and brought back with him one of the shrewdest and most upright of the *procureurs* of old times. For ten years Bordin had been the attorney of the noblesse, and his successor was the celebrated Derville. The worthy *procureur* at once chose

as counsel the grandson of a President of the Parliament of Normandy, a young barrister who had studied under him, and was aiming at an appointment (and, in fact, after the trial, this young M. de Granville was nominated to an office revived by the Emperor, and became deputy public prosecutor at Paris, and one of the most famous magistrates of our time).

M. de Granville took up the case as an opportunity of distinguishing himself on his first appearance before the public. In those days, barristers (*avocats*) were replaced by officially appointed counsel, so that no case might be left undefended, and any citizen might plead the cause of innocence; but for all that, the accused usually employed a barrister, as before.

The old Marquis was startled by the havoc that sorrow had wrought in Laurence; but he behaved with admirable taste and tact. Not a word did he say of wasted advice. He introduced Bordin as an oracle to be obeyed to the letter, and young M. de Granville as a champion in whom they might put entire confidence.

Laurence held out her hand to the Marquis; her cordial grasp charmed him.

"You were right," she said.

"Will you listen to my advice this time?" he asked.

The Countess made a sign of assent; Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre did likewise.

"Very well. Come to my house; it is in the middle of the town and close to the court-house. You and your counsel will be better lodged there than here, where you are huddled up together and much too far from the scene of action. You would have to cross Troyes every day."

Laurence accepted the offer. M. de Chargebœuf took the two ladies to his house, and all through the trial the Cinq-Cygne party and their counsel stayed there. After dinner, when the doors were shut, Bordin made Laurence tell the whole story exactly as it happened, begging her not to leave out a single particular; although he and the young lawyer had heard it already in part from the Marquis during their journey

from Paris to Troyes. Bordin sat listening, with his feet to the fire, without the slightest assumption of consequence. As for the counsel, young M. de Granville, he was divided between admiration of Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and the attention he was bound to give to the facts of the case.

"Is that quite all?" asked Bordin, when Laurence had told the whole story of the drama down to that day.

"Yes," said she.

The deepest silence prevailed for some minutes. One of the most solemn scenes in a man's life, and one that seldom comes into ordinary experience, was taking place in that room in the Hôtel de Chargebœuf. Every case is tried by counsel before it comes before a judge, just as every death is foreseen by the doctor before the final struggle with the laws of nature. Laurence, Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, and the Marquis sat with their eyes fixed upon the *procureur's* dark old face, with its deep seams left by the small-pox. Life or death?—he was about to pronounce the word. Laurence glanced at M. de Granville, and saw that he looked downcast.

"Well, my dear Bordin?" said the Marquis, holding out his snuff-box, which the *procureur* took in an absent-minded fashion. Bordin rubbed the calves of his legs (he wore black cloth breeches and black floss silk stockings, and the long coat of the eighteenth century); then he turned his crafty eyes upon his clients, but there was a misgiving in their expression which struck a chill into them.

"Am I to dissect this case," asked he, "and tell you frankly what I think?"

"Pray go on, monsieur," said Laurence.

"All that you have done with good intent turns against you," Bordin proceeded to say. "You cannot save your relatives; you can only try to get them off easily. The fact that you told Michu to sell his land will be taken as proof positive of your criminal designs upon the Senator. You sent off your servants to Troyes on purpose to be alone; it looks so much the more probable because it is the truth. The elder M. d'Hauteserre made a terrible remark to Beauvisage; it will

ruin you all. Something that you yourself said in your own courtyard proves that you have borne ill-will to Gondreville for some time past. As for you, indeed, you were acting as sentinel at the park gates when the thing was done; if they do not proceed against you it is simply because they wish to avoid an element of interest in the case."

"The case is not defensible," said M. de Granville.

"So much the less so because the truth cannot now be told. Michu, the MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre are bound simply to assert that they were out in the forest with you for a part of the day, and that they breakfasted at Cinq-Cygne. But if we can prove that you were all there at three o'clock, the time of the deed, who are the witnesses? Marthe, wife of one of the defendants, the Durieus and Catherine, all in your service, and Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, parents of two of the accused. Such witnesses are worthless; the law will not take their testimony against you, and common sense rejects their evidence in your favor. If you were so ill-advised as to say that you had gone out to find eleven hundred thousand francs in gold in the forest, you would send all five of them to the hulks as robbers. The Public Accuser, the jury, the bench, the audience, and every creature in France would think that you stole the gold from Gondreville and shut him up in order to do the deed. Taking the indictment as it stands the case is not clear against you; but given the simple truth, the whole thing looks absolutely transparent; the jury will think that the robbery clears up every obscure point, for a Royalist means a brigand nowadays. As it stands the case points to an act of revenge not inadmissible in the political situation. The accused have incurred the extreme penalty, but that is no disgrace in people's eyes; whereas if you bring the abstraction of specie into the affair, it must seem an unlawful proceeding, and you will lose a certain amount of interest that the public takes in the condemned, so long as the crime appears excusable. If at the very beginning you could have produced your map of the forest, and shown the hiding-places, the tin canisters, and the money, so as to account for

your day, you might possibly have got off before impartial magistrates; but as things are, silence must be kept. God send that none of the defendants have compromised the case; but we shall see what we can make out of their examination."

Laurence wrung her hands despairingly and raised her eyes to heaven in her distress; the depths of the gulf into which her cousins had fallen were opened out before her for the first time. The Marquis and M. de Granville both approved Bordin's terrible discourse. Old d'Hauteserre was crying.

"Why did you not listen to the Abbé Goujet, when he wanted them to fly?" Madame d'Hauteserre cried in exasperation.

"Ah!" exclaimed Bordin. "If you could have saved them and did not do so their death will lie at your door. Judgment for contempt of court gains time. And with time the innocent clear up their affairs. This is the blackest-looking case I have ever seen in my life, and I have seen some tolerably crooked ones, too."

"It is inexplicable for everybody, even for us," added M. de Granville. "If the accused are not guilty somebody else has done this. Five people don't come up by magic in a place, nor are their horses shod exactly in the same way as the horses of the accused, nor do they put Malin in a pit, and make up to resemble the MM. de Simeuse, d'Hauteserre, and Michu, on purpose to ruin them. The persons unknown, the real delinquents, must have had some motive for slipping into the skins of five innocent men; and if we are to find them and discover any traces, we, like the government, should want a system of detectives and a pair of eyes in every commune for twenty leagues round——"

"Which is out of the question," said Bordin, "so it is useless to think of it. Never since justice was invented has any community found out how to put at the disposal of the wrongfully accused the power that the magistrate can use against crime. The machinery of the judicial system is at the disposal of the prosecution but not of the defence. The defence has neither detectives nor police; the power of society is not

available to prove innocence; it is used to prove guilt. Innocence has argument only as a resource; and reasoning that carries weight with the judicial mind is often thrown away upon the prejudiced ears of the jury. The whole country is against you. The eight jurymen who returned a true bill were every one of them proprietors of National land. The *jury de jugement* will likewise consist of officials or buyers and sellers of National lands. In short, we shall have a *malignant* jury on Malin's case, and therefore a complete system of defence is a necessity; keep to it and die in your innocence. You will be condemned. We shall appeal to the Court of Cassation, and we will try to gain time there. In the meantime I can collect proof, and there is still the appeal to mercy left. There you have the anatomy of the case and my opinion on it. If we win the day (for anything is possible in a court of law) it will be a miracle; but of all counsel that I know, yours is most likely to work a miracle and I will help him."

"The Senator is sure to have the key to the enigma," added M. de Granville, "if any one bears you a grudge you always know who it is, and why. Here you see a man leaving Paris at the end of winter, coming alone to Gondreville, shutting himself up with his notary, and, as you may say, playing into the hands of five men who kidnap him."

"His behavior, certainly, is at least as extraordinary as ours," said Bordin; "but how are we to change our position from the accused to accusers, when the whole country is against us? You need good-will to do it, and the help of the Government, and a thousand times more proof than in an ordinary case. I can see malice aforethought of the very subtlest kind in our unknown enemies; they know how Michu and the MM. de Simeuse stand with regard to Malin. To say not a word, to take nothing!—there is prudence for you. There are anything but common criminals behind those masks, I can see! But imagine yourself saying such things as this to the sort of jury they will give us!"

Laurence was amazed and confused by this perspicacity in private affairs, the impersonal clear-sightedness which makes

barristers and some magistrates so great. His remorseless logic clutched at her heart.

"Not ten criminal cases out of a hundred are thoroughly investigated in a court of law; and in a good third probably the mystery is never cleared up. There are cases which remain inscrutable for the prosecution and the defence, the law and the public, and yours is one of them. As for his Majesty, even if the MM. de Simeuse had never wished to overturn his Government, he will not interfere, he has other fish to fry. But who the devil bears Malin a grudge? and why?"

Bordin and M. de Granville looked at one another. They looked as though they doubted whether Laurence had told the truth; and among all the many painful experiences during the trial, that moment of poignant anguish was the worst. She looked at her counsel, and their suspicions died away.

The next day the report of the examination was in the counsel's hands, and they were allowed to communicate with the accused. Bordin informed the family that the accused, as upright men, "were keeping up well," in professional phrase.

"M. de Granville is going to defend Michu," said Bordin.

"Michu?——" cried M. de Chargebœuf, surprised at the change of plan.

"He is the heart of the affair, and that is where the danger lies," returned Bordin.

"If he is the most exposed, the thing seems fair," cried Laurence.

"We can see a few chances," said M. de Granville, "and we shall study them thoroughly. If it is possible to get them off, it will be because M. d'Hauteserre told Michu to mend one of the posts in the fence by the hollow way, and mentioned that a wolf had been in the forest. In a criminal court all turns upon the pleading, and the pleading turns on little things that may become immense, as you will see."

Then Laurence sank into a mental prostration that invariably deadens the soul of every energetic person, when it is apparent that nothing they can do is of any avail. This was no question of compassing the downfall of a man or a govern-

ment with the aid of a devoted band of men; here was no scope for fanatical zeal enveloped in dark mystery. All classes were up in arms against her and her cousins. It is impossible, single-handed, to break open a prison; nor can you effect a rescue when the whole population is hostile to the prisoners, and the police are put on their mettle by the supposed audacity of the accused. Young M. de Granville was alarmed by the stupor that came over the high-spirited, generous girl, a stupor which her appearance exaggerated. He tried to raise her courage, but she answered, "I am waiting and suffering in silence."

The words spoken in such a tone, with such a look and gesture, were among the sublime things that would be famous if spoken on a wider stage. A few minutes afterwards old d'Hauteserre said to the Marquis de Chargebœuf:

"The trouble that I have taken for my two unlucky boys! I had saved till there was an income of nearly eight thousand livres for them, from investments in the funds. If they had only chosen to go into the service they would have taken good positions and might have married very well at this day. And here are all my plans gone to wreck and ruin!"

"How can you think of their interests," said his wife, "when honor and life is involved?"

"M. d'Hauteserre thinks of everything," said the Marquis.

While the party from Cinq-Cygne was waiting for the trial to come on in the criminal court, and making fruitless applications to be allowed to see the prisoners, something of the greatest importance was going on out of sight at the château. Marthe had made her deposition before the *jury d'accusation*, but the Public Accuser thought that her evidence was not worth bringing into the criminal court. The poor woman sat in the drawing-room at Cinq-Cygne, keeping Mademoiselle Goujet company; she had sunk, like many persons of extreme sensibility, into a kind of apathy pitiful to see. To her, as to the curé, and in fact to anybody else who did not know how the accused had spent that day, their innocence seemed doubt-

ful. There were moments when Marthe thought that Michu, with his masters and Laurence, had wreaked their revenge on the Senator. The unhappy wife knew Michu's devotion well enough to see that of all the accused he ran the greatest danger, both on account of his past and the share that he must have had in carrying out the present affair. The Abbé Goujet, his sister, and Marthe lost themselves among the probabilities to which this opinion gave rise, but by dint of dwelling on these thoughts their minds began to attach a certain significance to them. The condition of suspended judgment required by Descartes is as hard to obtain in the human mind as a vacuum in nature; and the mental process which secures the result is something as abnormal and artificial as the action of an air-pump. People have an opinion of some sort under any circumstances. And Marthe was so afraid that the accused were guilty that her dread amounted to a belief. That frame of mind proved fatal.

Five days after the arrest, just as she was going to bed about ten o'clock, she heard her name called from the courtyard; her mother had walked over from the farm.

"There is a workman come from Troyes with a message for you from Michu," she said; "he is waiting for you in the hollow way."

Both the women took the short cut through the breach. It was so dark in the lane that Marthe could only see a man's form looming through the shadows.

"Speak, madame, so that I may know if you really are Madame Michu," said a somewhat uneasy voice.

"I certainly am. What do you want with me?"

"Good," said the stranger. "Give me your hand; do not be afraid of me." Then he bent forward and whispered, "Michu sent me with a word or two for you. I am one of the jailers; if they found out that I have been absent it will be the ruin of us all. Trust me. Your good father found me my place in time past; so Michu counted on me."

He slipped a letter into Marthe's hand, and vanished among the trees without waiting for an answer. Something

like a shiver ran through Marthe as she thought that now, no doubt, she should know the secret. She ran to the farm with her mother, and locked herself in to read the letter.

"MY DEAR MARTHE,—You may reckon on the discretion of the bearer; he can neither read nor write. He is one of the staunchest Republicans of the Babeuf conspiracy. Your father often made him useful, and he looks on the Senator as a traitor. Well, now, dear wife, we have shut up the Senator in the vault where the masters were hidden once before. The wretch has only victuals enough for five days, and as it is to our interest that he should live, take him provisions to last for another five days at least, as soon as you have read these few lines. The forest is certain to be watched, so be as careful as we used to be when the young gentlemen were in hiding. Do not speak to Malin; do not say one single word; and put on one of our masks; you will find it lying on the cellar steps. You must keep the most absolute silence on this secret that I am obliged to tell you. Not a word of it to Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, or she might show the white feather. Fear nothing for me. We are sure of coming safely out of this affair, and if it comes to that, Malin will save us. Lastly, I need not tell you to burn this letter as soon as you have read it. If any one saw a single line of it, it might cost me my head. Most lovingly yours,

"MICHU."

The only persons who knew of the existence of the hiding-place in the mound in the forest were Michu, François, the four nobles, Laurence, and Marthe herself; so, at least, Marthe was certain to think, for her husband had said nothing to her of his encounter with Peyrade and Corentin. The letter could only come from Michu, and besides, it seemed to be written and signed by him. If Marthe had gone at once to her mistress and the two lawyers, who knew that the accused were not guilty, the crafty *procureur* might have gained some light on the treacherous stratagem that had taken his clients; but, like

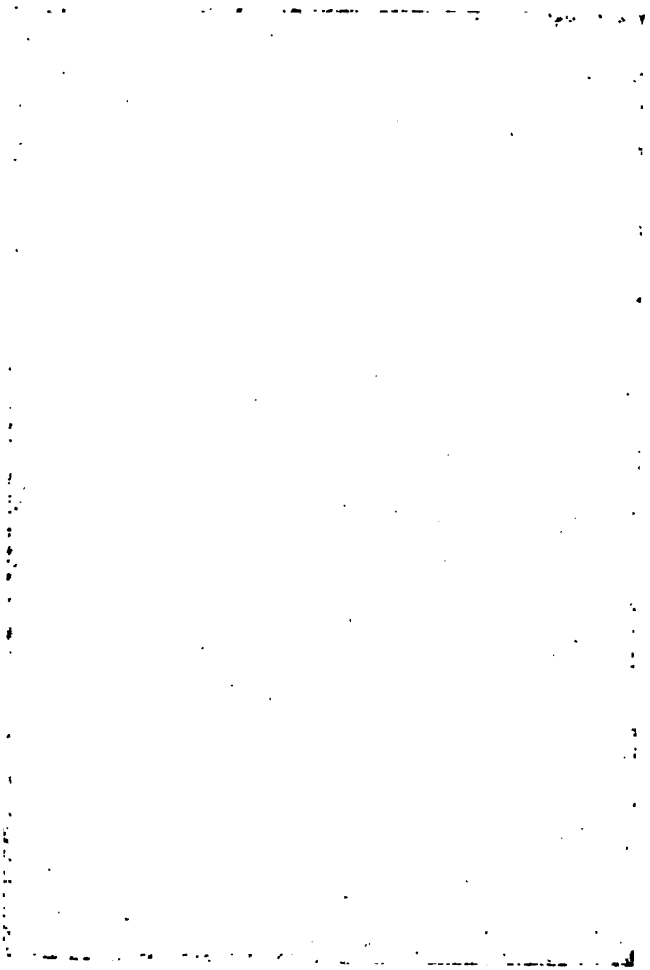
most women, Marthe acted on her first impulse, and saw the force of the obvious considerations. She threw the letter into the fire. Yet, some unaccountable flash of prudence led her to rescue the blank half of the sheet and the first few lines. There was nothing there to compromise any one. She sewed the scrap of paper into her dress.

Then she thought with no little dismay that the prisoner had been without food for twenty-four hours, and resolved to take meat and bread and wine to the vault that very night. Curiosity and humanity alike forbade her to put off the errand till to-morrow. She heated the oven to bake a couple of round loaves, which she made herself, and with her mother's help prepared a game pasty and rice pudding, and roasted a couple of fowls. About half-past two that morning, she packed the provisions and two bottles of wine in a basket, strapped it about her shoulders, and set off through the forest, taking Couraut with her. The dog made an admirable scout, scenting a stranger at a great distance, and returning to his mistress with a low growl, and muzzle turned to the dangerous quarter.

It was nearly three o'clock that morning when Marthe reached the pool and left Couraut on guard. It took nearly half an hour to move the stones from the opening. She found the mask on the step as the letter said, and entered the vault with a dark lantern. Apparently the Senator's imprisonment had been arranged a long while beforehand. There was an opening which Marthe had not seen on former visits; a hole about a foot square had been roughly contrived in the door, while the bolt was secured by a padlock, lest Malin, with a prisoner's time and patience at his disposal, should succeed in reaching it from within.

The Senator had risen from his bed of moss and heaved a sigh; he guessed at the sight of a masked figure that he was not yet to be set at liberty. He watched Marthe as well as he could by the uncertain light of the dark lantern till at last he recognized her. He knew her by her dress, her stout figure, and her movements, and when she passed the pasty through

"You cannot deny that you are Madame Michu"



"You cannot deny that you are Madame Michu"

the hole he let it fall to catch her by the hands. Swiftly as might be he tried to pull two rings from her fingers, her wedding-ring and a little keepsake given her by Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne.

"You cannot deny that you are Madame Michu, my dear madam," he exclaimed.

At the touch of the Senator's fingers, Marthe clenched her fist and dealt him a vigorous blow in the chest. Then, without a word, she cut a sufficiently strong stick, and the Senator received the rest of his provisions on the end of it.

"What do they want with me?" he asked.

Marthe hurried away without replying. She had nearly reached home, towards five o'clock, when Couraut gave warning of the unwelcome presence of some one on the skirts of the forest. Retracing her steps, she went toward the lodge that had been her home for so many years; but as she came out into the avenue the Gondreville park-keeper saw her in the distance, and she at once decided to go straight toward him.

"You are out very early, Madame Michu," was his greeting.

"We are so unlucky that I have to do a servant's work, myself," she said. "I am going to Bellache for some seeds."

"Then have you no seeds at Cinq-Cygne?" asked he.

Marthe did not answer. She went on to Bellache and asked Beauvisage to let her have several kinds of seeds. "M. d'Hauteserre had told her to try a change of strain," she said. Marthe had no sooner gone than the Gondreville keeper came over to the farm to know why she had been there.

Six days afterwards Marthe took the provisions at midnight, so as to avoid keepers. She had learned prudence. Evidently they were watching the forest. A third time she took food to the Senator. The trial had begun, and it was with something like panic that she listened while the curé read the report aloud.

She took the abbé aside, made him swear to keep her secret as if it were told in confession, showed him the rescued fragments of Michu's letter, and told him where the Senator lay

hidden. The abbé asked at once whether Marthe had other letters in her husband's handwriting to compare with the burnt scrap; and Marthe went back to the farm on this errand, to find a summons to appear as a witness in the case. When she came back to the château, she heard that the Abbé Goujet and his sister had been likewise summoned by the defence, and all three of them were obliged to set out at once for Troyes. In this manner all the actors in the drama, and even those that might be called the supers, were all assembled on the stage where the fate of two families was at stake.

There are very few places in France where the surroundings of justice contribute to that impressiveness which should never be lacking. Religion and kingship apart, is not the judicial system the most important piece of social mechanism? Everywhere, even in Paris, the shabbiness and bad arrangement of the premises and the lack of a proper setting diminish the effect of the enormous power of the law upon the imagination of a people more vainglorious, more fond of spectacular display in public buildings, than any other nation of modern times.

The arrangements are almost the same everywhere. You enter a long rectangular hall, with a desk covered with green baize at the further end on the slightly raised platform where the judges sit in ordinary armchairs. The Public Accuser's seat is placed to the left, just beyond the jury-box, a space enclosed along the wall, and provided with chairs for the jury. The accused, and the policemen on duty sit on a bench in a similar enclosed space against the opposite wall, the counsel for the defence is immediately below, and in front of the prisoners. Below the platform, at a table covered with documents relating to the case, sits the clerk of assize; and (before the Emperor remodeled the courts) the commissary for the government and the Director of the Jury used to sit each at a table on either side of the judges' desk. Two ushers of the court hover about in the space left for witnesses. A wooden balustrade connects the jury-box with the dock at the lower end, forming an enclosure where benches are placed for wit-

nesses that have given their evidence, and a few privileged auditors; while a shabby gallery above the entrance door, and opposite the judges, is reserved for the accommodation of the authorities, and ladies, and others admitted by the President who regulates these matters. As for the unprivileged public, they are allowed to stand in the space between the wooden balustrade and the entrance.

The Criminal Court of Troyes looked like any tribunal or assize court of the present day. But in 1806, neither the President nor the four judges who composed the court, nor the Public Accuser, nor the Director of the Jury, nor any one else except the gendarme wore any distinctive dress or badge of office to relieve the general bareness of the place, and tolerably insignificant countenances. The crucifix was lacking, with its moral lesson for the judges and the accused. Everything was dismal and commonplace. The pomp and circumstance so necessary in the interests of the body social, perhaps afford a certain solace to the criminal. People flocked eagerly to the trial, as they always have done on such occasions, and always will do, so long as manners and customs remain unreformed; so long as France fails to discern that while publicity is by no means secured by the admission of the public, the trial, on the other hand, becomes an ordeal, painful beyond measure; how painful, no legislator can have imagined or it would never have been inflicted. Manners and customs are often more cruel than the law. The manners of the time are the outcome of human nature; the law is framed by the intellect of the nation, and customs not seldom irrational are stronger than law.

A mob had gathered about the court-house. The President was obliged to have the doors guarded by the military, as is usual during sensational trials. Inside, the space between the door and the balustrade was crowded with people so tightly packed that they could scarcely breathe.

M. de Granville appeared for Michu, and Bordin for the MM. de Simeuse, while a local barrister represented Gothard and the MM. d'Hauteserre, the least compromised among the

accused. All three lawyers were at their posts before the proceedings began. Their faces inspired confidence; a doctor never allows a patient to see his misgivings, and a lawyer always shows his client a hopeful countenance. These are the rare cases when insincerity becomes a virtue.

There was a murmur in favor of the four young men when the prisoners came into court, looking somewhat paler for the twenty days of confinement and suspense. The close resemblance between the twin brothers excited the highest degree of interest in them. Perhaps each one thought that Nature should have taken an especial care of one of her most curious rarities, and felt tempted to atone for one of the oversights of fate. Their noble, simple bearing, without a trace of either shame or bravado, impressed the women not a little. All four of the gentlemen and Gothard appeared in the costume in which they were arrested, but Michu's clothes being part of the evidence, he wore his best—a blue greatcoat, a brown velvet "Robespierre" waistcoat, and a white cravat. The poor man paid the penalty of his sinister looks. A murmur of horror broke from the audience if he made any chance movement, or turned his keen, bright, tawny eyes on them. They were inclined to see the finger of God in his appearance in the dock, whither his father-in-law had sent so many victims. And he, with true magnanimity, looked at his masters and repressed an ironical smile. "I am doing you harm," his eyes seemed to say. Five of the prisoners exchanged cordial greetings with their counsel. Gothard still acted the idiot.

After the counsel for the defence had judiciously used their right to challenge some of the names on the jury (the Marquis de Chargebœuf had the courage to sit between M. Bordin and M. de Granville to give information on this point), the panel was completed, the indictment read over, and the accused separated for examination. Their answers were remarkably similar. They had ridden out in the forest all morning, returning at one o'clock to breakfast at Cinq-Cygne. Afterwards, between three and half-past five, they

were again in the forest. This was the substance of all their statements; the details varied with the particular circumstances in each case. The MM. de Simeuse, for instance, asked by the President why they had gone out so early in the morning, separately declared that since their return home they had had thoughts of buying Gondreville; that, as Malin came down on the previous day, they meant to treat with him, and had gone out with Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and Michu to make a survey on which they meant to base their offer. Meanwhile the MM. d'Hauteserre, with their cousin and Gothard, had gone after a wolf that some of the peasants had seen. If the Director of the Jury, who found the hoof-marks in the park at Gondreville, had taken as much pains to find the prints left in the forest, they could have shown that they had been far away from the château at the time.

The examination of the MM. d'Hauteserre confirmed these statements, which agreed with their previous examinations by the magistrate. Obliged to give some reason for their excursion, each of them separately hit upon the idea of a hunting party. Some peasants had seen a wolf in the forest a few days before, and each of them took this as a pretext.

Still the Public Accuser made the most of the discrepancies between the present and the preliminary examinations, when the MM. d'Hauteserre deposed that they all were hunting together. Now it seemed that the d'Hauteserres and Laurence de Cinq-Cygne had gone hunting, while the MM. de Simeuse had been surveying the forest.

M. de Granville pointed out, that, as the misdemeanor was committed some time between two and half-past five, the accused must be believed when they accounted for the way in which they had spent the morning.

To this, the Accuser replied that it was to the prisoners' interest to conceal their preparations for the illegal detention of the Senator.

Then the skill with which the defence was conducted became apparent to all eyes. Judge, jury, and spectators soon saw that victory would be hotly disputed. Bordin and M. de

Granville seemed to be provided for all contingencies. Innocence is bound to give a clear and plausible account of its actions; and therefore it is the duty of the counsel for the defence, to oppose a probable romance to the improbable romance invented by the prosecution. If the prisoner's counsel believes in his client's innocence, he shows that the case for the prosecution is a myth. The public examination of the four nobles gave a sufficient and favorable explanation of the matter. So far all went well. But Michu's examination was a more serious affair, and on that the battle closed. Every one now understood why M. de Granville had chosen to defend the servant rather than the masters.

Michu admitted that he had threatened Marion, but flatly denied the violence attributed to his threats. As to lying in wait for Malin, he said that he had simply been walking in the park; the Senator and Grévin might have been frightened by the sight of the muzzle of his gun and taken it as a threat when no threat was intended. He pointed out that if a man is not used to handling a gun, he may imagine that the muzzle is pointed at him, when, as a matter of fact, it is resting on the owner's shoulder; and he accounted for the condition of his clothes, by the fact that he had a fall as he climbed the gap on his way home.

"It was too dark to see to climb," he said; "I clutched at the stones to hoist myself up to the hollow way, and some of them came tumbling down on me."

Questioned as to the cement that Gothard was carrying, he replied now as on all previous occasions, that it was wanted to fix one of the gate-posts at the top of the hollow way.

The Public Accuser and the President both asked him how he came to be in the gap in the fosse, when he had been mending the gate at the other end of the way, especially as the justice, the gendarmes, and the rural policeman all declared that they heard him come up the lane. Michu replied that M. d'Hauteserre had blamed him for not doing the little job before, because the commune might raise difficulties about the right of way. So he had gone to the château to say that the gate-post had been mended.

M. d'Hauteserre, as a matter of fact, had put a gate across the hollow lane to prevent the commune from claiming the right of way; and Michu, seeing how important it was to account for the state of his clothes and the use of the cement which he could not deny, had invented this subterfuge. If the truth often looks like fiction in a court of law, fiction, on the other hand, often looks like truth. Both the prosecution and the defence attached great importance to the statement; and all the efforts of the defence, all the suspicions of the Public Accuser, centered about this capital point.

Gothard, prompted no doubt by M. de Granville, admitted that Michu told him to fetch some bags of cement; hitherto he had always begun to cry as soon as any questions were put to him.

"Why did not you or Gothard take the justice of the peace and the policeman to the gate at once?" asked the Public Accuser.

"I never thought that it was to be a question of life and death for us."

All the prisoners except Gothard were removed. When the boy was left alone in the dock the President advised him to tell the truth, in his own interests, reminding him that his pretence of idiocy had broken down. Not one of the jury mistook him for an idiot. If he refused to tell what he knew he laid himself open to heavy penalties; whereas by telling the truth, he would probably clear himself. Gothard began to cry, wavered, and said at length that Michu had told him to bring several bags of cement; but that each time he met him near the farm. They asked how many bags he had brought down.

"Three," he said.

At this a dispute began between Gothard and Michu as to the number of the bags. Were there three, counting the bag that Gothard was bringing at the time of his arrest, or three besides the last? The point was decided in Michu's favor. The jury held that only two bags had been used, and it seemed that they had made up their minds on that score al-

ready. Bordin and M. de Granville thought it advisable to give them a surfeit of cement till they grew so confused and weary of it that they understood nothing. M. de Granville in conclusion suggested that experts should be appointed to examine the condition of the posts.

"The Director of the Jury," urged the defence, "was satisfied to inspect the place not so much to obtain the unbiased opinion of experts, as to find proofs of foul play on Michu's part. But in our opinion he failed in his duty; and his error should not be turned to our disadvantage."

The court accordingly appointed experts to discover whether a post had recently been set. The Public Accuser, on the other hand, tried to turn the circumstance to account before the inquiry was made.

"So you chose a time of day when it is almost dark, to fix a post, and to do it all by yourself?" he asked Michu.

"M. d'Hauteserre had given me a scolding."

"But if you used cement over it, you must have taken a trowel and a hod. Now, if you went off so promptly to tell M. d'Hauteserre that you had carried out his orders, it is impossible to explain how Gothard came to be bringing you more cement. You must have gone right past your house, and in that case you could have left your tools there and spoken to Gothard."

The argument came like a thunderbolt. There was a dreadful silence in the court.

"Come now," said the Public Accuser, "confess; that hole was not dug for the post——"

"Then do you suppose it was for the Senator?" asked Michu, with intense irony in his tones.

M. de Granville formally called the Public Accuser to order on this point. Michu was accused not of murder, but of kidnapping and false imprisonment. Nothing could be more serious than such a question. By the Code of Brumaire of the year IV., the Public Accuser was forbidden to bring up any new charge in the course of the trial; he was bound to keep to the indictment, or the trial would be annulled.

The Public Accuser replied to the effect that Michu, the prime mover in the affair, had taken all the responsibility on his own shoulders, to save his masters; and that he might very well have been obliged to block up the entrance to the place as yet unknown, where the Senator groaned.

Closely pressed with questions, worried in Gothard's presence, and made to contradict himself, Michu brought down his fist with a bang on the ledge of the dock.

"I have had nothing to do with kidnapping the Senator," he said. "I incline to think that his enemies have simply shut him up somewhere; but if he makes his appearance, you will see that the cement could not possibly have come into the affair at all."

"Good!" said M. de Granville, addressing the Public Accuser, "you have done more in my client's defence than anything I can say."

The court rose, after a bold assertion which took the jury by surprise, and told for the defence. The bar of Troyes and Bordin greeted Michu's young counsel with enthusiastic congratulations. The Public Accuser was disturbed in his mind. He was afraid that he had fallen into some trap; and, as a matter of fact, he had walked into a snare very skilfully set for him by the defence, in which Gothard had just distinguished himself. Wags in the town said that the case had been patched up; that the Public Accuser had made a botch of the business, and the Simeuses had been whitewashed. Anything in France is fair game for a jest,—a jest rules the nation. Your Frenchman cuts his joke on the scaffold, in the Beresina, at the barricades; probably, even on the Day of Judgment, there will be one or two that will make an epigram here and there.

Next day the witnesses for the prosecution were called. Madame Marion, Madame Grévin, Grévin himself, the Senator's man, and Violette made depositions as might be expected. All of them showed more or less hesitation as to the four nobles; all were quite certain as to Michu. Beauvisage repeated the words let fall by Robert d'Hauteserre; the peas-

ant, who came for the calf, deposed to having heard Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's remark about burning Gondreville. The blacksmiths were called, and confirmed their previously given evidence as to the horseshoes from the Cinq-Cygne stables, which exactly fitted the prints left by the park gate. Naturally, there was a hot battle over this fact between M. de Granville and the Public Accuser. The Cinq-Cygne blacksmith was summoned by the defence, and it came out in the course of the examinations, that precisely similar horseshoes had been sold a few days previously to persons unknown in the country. The smith likewise declared that he shod plenty of horses in that fashion besides those from Cinq-Cygne. Finally, Michu's horse happened to have been shod at Troyes, and the prints could not be found among the others in the park.

"Michu's double did not know that," said M. de Granville, looking at the jury, "and the prosecution has failed to prove that we used one of the horses from the château."

With withering emphasis he disposed of Violette's evidence as to the horses. The man had seen them at a distance with their tails turned toward him. But in spite of incredible efforts made on Michu's behalf, the weight of circumstantial evidence against him was too strong. The Accuser, the public, the court, and the jury, all felt alike that the servant's guilt once proven, the master's connivance was a necessary deduction. Bordin had rightly guessed where the knot lay when he appointed M. de Granville to defend Michu; but by so doing, the defence owned the weak points of their case. Meantime, everything concerning the ex-bailiff of Gondreville became a matter of palpitating interest.

Michu's demeanor was superb throughout. He displayed all the sagacity with which nature had gifted him; the public could not choose but see that this was no ordinary man, and, strange to say, for that very reason people felt the more convinced that he was guilty. The witnesses for the defence carried less weight with the jury than the witnesses for the prosecution; the former appeared to do their duty, and were

heard as a matter of duty. In the first place, neither Marthe nor Monsieur nor Madame d'Hauteserre could be sworn; Catherine and the Durieus, as domestic servants, were in the same predicament. M. d'Hauteserre said that he had in fact ordered Michu to reset a post that had been overturned. The experts' report, read at this juncture, confirmed old M. d'Hauteserre's testimony, but at the same time it told in favor of the Director of the Jury, for it was stated that the commission found it impossible to say when the work was done; the post might have been mended at any time within the last six weeks.

Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's appearance excited the keenest interest, but the sight of her cousins in the dock, after a separation of twenty-three days, affected her so violently that she looked guilty. She felt a dreadful longing to be beside her twin cousins. She said afterwards that it was all that she could do to fight down a furious desire to kill the Public Accuser that she too might stand beside them—a criminal in the eyes of the world. But she told quite simply how she had seen the smoke in the park, as they went back from Cinq-Cygne, and thought that something must be on fire. For some time she had thought that they were burning weeds.

"And yet," she said, "I will call your attention to something which I only remembered afterwards. The folds of my collar and the loops of braid on my habit were filled with ashes, like burnt papers carried by the wind."

"Was there a considerable volume of smoke?" asked Bordin.

"Yes," replied Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. "I thought that something was on fire."

"This may change the whole aspect of the case," said Bordin. "I make application to the court for an order for the immediate investigation of the place where the fire was seen."

The President granted the order.

Grévin, recalled by the defence, declared that he knew nothing on this head. But Bordin and Grévin exchanged glances which let the light into the minds of either.

"So that is where the gist of it lies!" the old *procureur* said to himself.

"They are on the scent!" thought the notary.

But the shrewd, crafty pair knew equally well that the investigation was useless. Bordin knew that Grévin would be as close as a wall, and Grévin congratulated himself on having cleared away all traces of the fire. The experts and Pigoult were commissioned to search the park so as to settle the point, a side issue as it seemed, and a puerile matter; albeit, it is of capital importance in the rehabilitation which history owes to the accused. They declared that they found no traces of a fire anywhere. Two laborers, produced by Bordin, deposed that by the keeper's orders they had dug over a piece of burnt turf; what had been burned there they could not say. The keeper, recalled by the defence, said that as he went past the château on his way to see the masquerade at Arcis, the Senator told him to dig over a bit of meadow which he (Malin) had noticed that morning as he walked out.

"Had they burned weeds or papers there?"

"I saw nothing to lead me to suppose that papers had been burned," said the keeper.

The depositions of Mademoiselle Goujet and the curé of Cinq-Cygne made a good impression. As they walked toward the forest after vespers, they had seen the party with Michu riding out from the château. The abbé's position and principles lent weight to his words.

The Public Accuser's address to the jury was the ordinary speech made on such occasions. He felt secure of a condemnation. The accused were incorrigible enemies of France, French institutions, and French laws. They thirsted for disorder. They had been mixed up in plots against the Emperor's life; they had been in the Army of Condé; and yet that magnanimous sovereign had struck their names out of the list of *émigrés*. And this was how they repaid his clemency! —Out came all the oratorical flourishes used afterwards under the Bourbons against the Bonapartists, and again, at a later day, under the Orléans branch, against Republicans and Legitimists alike. Commonplaces, which might have had some meaning under a long-established government, must seem

comic, to say the least, when history finds them in the mouth of the public prosecutor through every political change. The old saying that arose out of more ancient troubles might be applied here—"The sign is changed, but the wine is the same as ever!" The Public Accuser (in this instance one of the most distinguished lawyers in the service of the Imperial Government) maintained that the misdemeanor was a sign of the times, an indication of a deliberate intention on the part of the returned *émigrés* to protest against the occupation of their forfeited estates. He made his audience shudder duly over the Senator's present position. Then, his ingenuity stimulated by the certain prospect of a reward for his zeal, he piled up proofs, semi-proofs, and probabilities in one accumulation, and sat quietly awaiting his adversaries' fire.

This was the first and last criminal case in which M. de Granville appeared for the defence; but it made his reputation. In the first place, he opened his pleading with that irresistible eloquence which we of to-day admire so much in M. Berryer. What was more, he was convinced that his clients were not guilty, and genuine conviction carries a force with it that nothing else can give.

The principal points of a defence, which the newspapers of the day reported in full, were as follows:

He began by putting Michu's life in its true light. It was a noble story to tell; the vibrations of the greatest and highest feeling in it roused the sympathies of many. Michu sat listening to his rehabilitation by that eloquent voice, and at times the tears overflowed the tawny eyes and trickled over his stern face. At that moment he looked as he really was,—simple and crafty as a child, and yet a man whose whole life had been ruled by one thought. Suddenly he had become comprehensible, and his tears completed the revelation. The effect produced upon the jury was great. The adroit counsel for the defence seized his opportunity to discuss the indictment.

"Where is the substantial proof of the charge? Where is

the Senator?" he asked. "You accuse us of imprisoning him and even of walling him up with stones and cement. But in that case we alone know where he is; and as you have kept us in prison for twenty-three days he must be starved to death by this time. We are murderers, and you have not charged us with murder. . . . But, if he is alive, we have accomplices; and if we had accomplices and the Senator is still alive, could we not produce him? When the intentions that you attribute to us have miscarried, why should we aggravate our position, since there is nothing to be gained by it? Repentance might possibly buy pardon now that we have failed; and yet we are supposed to persist in detaining a man from whom we can get nothing! Is not this absurd? You may take away your cement; it fails in its effect," he continued, addressing the Accuser. "We are either stupid criminals (which you do not believe) or innocent men, victims of circumstances inexplicable for us as for you. You had far better have looked for that mass of papers burned in the Senator's grounds. That fact shows that there is some reason more pressing than your hypothetical one, some other way of accounting for his illegal detention——"

Into these suppositions M. de Granville entered with wonderful skill. He dwelt upon the high character of the witnesses for the defence, witnesses whose lively religious faith argued a belief in the future and eternal punishment. On this head he was sublime; he saw how to make a profound impression.

"What!" said he, "the criminals are quietly dining after their cousin brings the news that the Senator has been kidnapped. The officer sent to arrest them suggests that they should give up the Senator and the affair shall go no further, and they refuse; they do not even know what the charge is."

With that M. de Granville hinted at a mystery; time would provide a clue to it, and the injustice of the accusation would come to light. Once upon this ground he had the audacity and ingenuity to put himself in the place of one of the jury;

he rehearsed his deliberations with his colleagues; he described his distress of mind, when it was discovered that there had been a mistake, and that he had been the means of bringing a heavy sentence upon innocent men; he painted his remorse so vividly and recapitulated all his doubts so forcibly that he left the jury in horrible anxiety.

Juries in those days were not hardened to this kind of appeal; it possessed the charm of novelty, and M. de Granville's auditors were visibly shaken by it. To M. de Granville's fervid eloquence succeeded the wily and specious Bordin. He multiplied considerations, he brought forward all the obscure points, and made them inexplicable. He set himself to make an impression upon the mind and judgment, as M. de Granville had appealed to the imagination and the heart. He succeeded, in fact, in entangling the jury with such earnest conviction that the Public Accuser saw his scaffold falling to pieces. This was so evident that the counsel representing the MM. d'Hauteserre and Gothard, finding there was no attempt to press the charge against his clients, left his case to the discretion of the jury.

The Accuser made application for an adjournment; he would give his rejoinder on the morrow. Bordin, reading acquittal in the eyes of the jury, if they considered their verdict while the effect of the pleading was fresh, objected, on the score of law and fact, to another night of suspense for his innocent clients. In vain. The judges held a consultation.

"It seems to me," said the President, "that the interests of the public equal the interests of the accused. The court could not refuse such an application if made by the defence, without falling short of all ideas of justice; so it must be granted to the prosecution."

"A miss is as good as a mile," said Bordin, looking at his clients. "Acquitted to-day, you may be brought in guilty to-morrow."

"In any case, we can only admire you," said the elder Simeuse.

Tears stood in Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's eyes. She

had not looked for such a success after the doubts of her counsel. People came to congratulate her, and every one made sure that her cousins would be acquitted.

But the whole scene was to be changed by a sudden, startling event,—the most unexpected and ominous occurrence that ever altered the entire aspect of a criminal case.

Senator Malin was found on the highroad to Troyes, at five o'clock in the morning on the day after M. de Granville's pleading! Persons unknown had set him at liberty while he slept, and he was now on his way to Troyes, totally unaware that Europe was ringing with his name, or that a trial was proceeding, and merely glad to breathe fresh air again. If other people were amazed to see the man upon whom the whole drama turned, he was at least as much astounded by the news that they gave him. A farmer lent his cart, and Malin soon reached the Prefect's house at Troyes. The Prefect sent at once for the Director of the Jury, the commissary, and the Public Accuser; and the Senator told his story. A warrant was made out for Marthe's arrest, and she was apprehended while still in bed at the Durieus'. Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, at liberty on bail, was likewise snatched from one of her few brief moments of slumber during the long agony of the trial, and detained at the prefecture to be examined. Orders came to the prison; the accused were not to be permitted to communicate with any one,—not even with their counsel. At ten o'clock, the assembled crowd was informed that the court would not sit till one that afternoon.

This change, with the news of the Senator's deliverance, the arrests of Marthe and Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, and the isolation of the prisoners, struck dread into the inmost souls of the inmates of the Hôtel de Chargebœuf. It may be easily imagined, too, how the excitement spread among the reporters, and the people who came out of curiosity, till it traveled over the whole town, and even reached the working population. About ten o'clock, the Abbé Goujet came to see Monsieur and Madame d'Hauteserre, and to speak with the counsel; and they all breakfasted together, if people can be

said to breakfast in such circumstances. Afterwards the curé took M. de Granville and Bordin aside, told them what Marthe had said in confidence, and produced the scrap of the letter. The lawyers exchanged glances.

"There is no more to be said! It is all over with us, it seems. Let us at least put a good face upon it," said Bordin.

The Director of the Jury and the Public Accuser combined were too much for Marthe. Proof against her, moreover, was abundant. Lechesneau had sent to search the cell, and the bottom crust of Marthe's last loaf had been found there, with several empty bottles and other things. During the long hours of captivity Malin had made conjecture on conjecture, and sought every least sign of motive on the part of his enemies. Naturally he communicated everything to the magistrate. Michu's farmhouse had only recently been built, and as the oven was new the joints of the bricks in the floor had left a sort of pattern on the crust of the loaf. The bottles, besides, were sealed with green wax, similar, in all probability, to the wax on the bottles in Michu's cellar. These shrewd remarks produced the expected results; the examining magistrate made the identification in Marthe's presence. Lechesneau, the Public Accuser, and the commissary impressed her with the idea that nothing now save full confession could save her husband's life. Their seeming good-nature at a time when proof against her was so overwhelming drew the admission that no one knew of the hiding-place save Michu, the MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre, and that she herself had carried provisions to the Senator three times during the night. Laurence was obliged to own that Michu had discovered the hole and showed it to her, as a refuge for the nobles from the police.

As soon as the precognitions were made, intimation was sent to the jury and counsel. At three o'clock the President began by announcing that there were new elements in the case. Michu was confronted with three wine-bottles, and asked if he recognized his property; the prosecution at the same time pointing out that the wax on the empty bottles was precisely

similar to that used to seal a full bottle of wine taken from the farmhouse cellar by the magistrate in Marthe's presence. Michu declined to acknowledge them as his, but the fresh piece of circumstantial evidence told with the jury when the President informed them that the empty bottles had been found in the place where the Senator was confined. Each of the accused was examined separately as to the position of the hole in the ruins of the monastery, till, after all the witnesses had been called on either side, it was established that Michu had discovered the place, and that no one knew of it save Laurence and the four nobles. Judge, then, of the effect produced upon the jury when the Public Accuser announced that this very hiding-place had served as the Senator's prison.

Marthe was called as a witness. The keenest anxiety was felt by the accused and the audience when she appeared; and M. de Granville objected that a wife's testimony could not be taken against her husband. But the Public Accuser pointed out that Marthe, on her own confession, was an accessory after the fact, and that therefore she was neither sworn nor called as a witness; she was to be examined simply in the interest of truth.

"Besides," added the President, "we have only to read the report of her examination by the direction of the jury." And the preliminary report drawn up that morning was accordingly read aloud by the clerk of assize.

"Do you confirm these admissions?" asked the President.

Michu looked full at his wife, and she, understanding her mistake, fainted away. It is no exaggeration to say that this news fell like a thunderbolt upon the accused and their counsel.

"I never wrote a line to my wife from prison," asserted Michu, "and I do not know a single one of the turnkeys."

Bordin handed him the scrap of the letter; Michu had only to glance at it.

"Some one has imitated my handwriting," he exclaimed.

"That is all that is left to you to say," said the Public Accuser.

The Senator was now brought in with the due formalities. His appearance brought about a theatrical change of scene. At the President's bidding, Malin, or the Comte de Gondreville, as the judges called him, pitiless to the previous owners of his splendid home, looked long and earnestly at the accused. He stated that his captors were dressed exactly like the four gentlemen; but added that he was so much confused at the time that he could not positively state that the accused were guilty.

"What is more," said he, "I am convinced in my own mind that these gentlemen took no part in the matter. The hands that bandaged my eyes were rough and coarse. And so," he continued, glancing at Michu, "I should be more willing to believe that my sometime bailiff undertook that office; still, I beg the jury to weigh my deposition carefully. My suspicions are of the very slightest; I do not feel at all sure. And for this reason, the two men who seized and rode off with me, put me behind the man who bandaged my eyes, a red-haired man like Michu. And now, odd as my observation may be, I am bound to make it, for it tells in favor of the accused, and I beg him not to be offended by it. I was tied closely to the man's back, and, quickly as we rode, I noticed the odor of my captor, and it was not that peculiar to Michu. As for the woman who brought me provisions from time to time, I am certain that she was Marthe, Michu's wife. I knew her the first time I saw her, by the ring that Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne gave her; she had forgotten to take it off. The court and the jury will see the contradictions in these facts; I cannot explain them at all as yet."

Malin's deposition was received with unanimous approval and a murmur of applause. Bordin asked leave to cross-examine so invaluable a witness.

"Has M. le Sénateur reason to suppose that his detention might be attributed to other causes than the supposed interests of the accused?"

"I am certain of it," said the Senator, "but what the motive can have been, I do not know; for I can declare that during my twenty days of imprisonment I have not seen any one."

"Then do you think that at the château de Gondreville, there could be any information, titles, deeds, or papers of any importance to the MM. de Simeuse?"

"I do not think so," said Malin. "And even if it were so, I believe the gentlemen incapable of taking them by violence. They had only to ask me for them."

"Did not M. le Sénateur order papers to be burned in the park?" M. de Granville asked abruptly.

Malin looked across at Grévin. It was a sudden, keen glance that did not escape Bordin. Then he denied that he had burned any papers.

When the Public Accuser asked about the Senator's previous narrow escape in the park, and whether he (the Senator) had not been mistaken as to the position of Michu's rifle, Malin replied that Michu was on the watch in a tree. This caused a great sensation, for it confirmed Grévin's testimony. The Simeuses and d'Hauteserres sat unmoved and impassive while their enemy overwhelmed them with his generosity; to Laurence it was agony so intolerable that the Marquis de Chargebœuf again and again caught her arms to hold her back. The Comte de Gondreville withdrew with a bow to the accused. It was not returned,—a little thing that made the jury indignant.

"They are lost!" Bordin whispered in the Marquis' ear.

"Alas! lost through pride, now, as always," returned the Marquis.

"Our task, gentlemen, has grown too easy," said the Public Accuser, rising to address the jury.

He accounted for the bags of cement. They had been used to make the socket for the bolt that fastened the door of the cell in the manner described in the precognition made by Pigoult that morning. He showed, without difficulty, that no one, save the accused, knew of the existence of the hole. He brought up all the fictions of the defence, and pulverized the arguments with the new proofs obtained in this miraculous manner. In 1806, it was too soon after 1793 and the time of the "Supreme Being," to talk of the divine justice; he spared

the jury any allusion to the interference of Heaven. Finally, he added that the authorities would keep watch for the persons unknown who had set the Senator at liberty, and sat down to await the verdict with confidence.

The jury, to a man, were fully persuaded that there was a mystery, but that mystery in their opinion had been made by the accused; the prisoners would not speak out because private interests of the highest importance were involved.

To M. de Granville it was evident that there were machinations of some kind. He seemed, when he rose, to be overwhelmed, and this was in fact the truth, but it was not so much the new evidence that staggered him, as the manifest conviction of the jury. His pleading, perhaps, even surpassed yesterday's effort, for the second address was certainly a piece of closer and more logical reasoning than the first. But the indifference of the jury damped him; he was wasting words, and he knew it. It was a painful and numbing position. He pointed out that the Senator's release, as if by magic, and very certainly without the aid of Marthe or any of the accused, confirmed his previous arguments. Yesterday, surely, the accused might have expected an acquittal; and, if, as the prosecution supposed, they were able to detain or release the Senator, they would not have chosen to set him free till the verdict was returned. He tried to show that enemies concealed in obscurity were the only possible authors of the outrage.

Strange to say, while M. de Granville's words troubled the professional consciences of the judges and the Public Accuser, the jury listened as a matter of form; and the public, usually so ready to believe in the innocence of the prisoner, was convinced that the accused were guilty. There is an atmosphere of ideas. In a court of law the judges and jury feel the influence of the ideas of the crowd, and vice versa. The state of other people's minds can be known or felt, and M. de Granville in his peroration rose to a feverish exaltation due to his conviction that his clients were guiltless.

"In the name of the accused," he cried, "I pardon you in advance for a fatal mistake that nothing can explain. We are

playthings in the hands of some unknown Machiavellian power. Marthe Michu is the victim of a detestable fraud, as people will recognize when the misfortune is irreparable."

Bordin, with the Senator's deposition as a weapon, asked for the acquittal of the four nobles.

The President summed up the more fairly because the jury had evidently made up their minds. He even, on the strength of the Senator's deposition, leaned somewhat to the side of the accused; a piece of clemency which could not injure the case for the prosecution. In accordance with the verdicts declared by the foreman of the jury at eleven o'clock that night, Michu was sentenced to death, the MM. Simeuse to twenty-four, and the two d'Hauteserres to ten years penal servitude. Gothard was acquitted. The whole court tried to see how the five prisoners would bear themselves at the supreme moment when they came in as free men to hear their verdict and sentence. The four nobles looked long at Laurence; she flung them back a martyr's fiery glance from tearless eyes.

"If we had been acquitted she would have cried," the younger Simeuse said to his brother.

Never did accused confront an unjust sentence with quieter brows nor more dignified bearing than these five victims of a villainous plot.

"Our counsel has pardoned you," said the Marquis de Simeuse, addressing the court.

Madame d'Hauteserre fell ill, and kept her bed; for three months she could not leave the Hôtel de Chargebœuf. M. d'Hauteserre went peaceably back to Cinq-Cygne; but he was old, he had none of the distractions of youth to prevent the sorrow of age from eating his heart away. His frequent fits of absence of mind told the curé that the poor father was always on the morrow of that fatal arrest. There was no need to try Michu's beautiful wife. Marthe died in prison three weeks after her husband was sentenced to death. Her son she recommended to Laurence, in whose arms she passed away.

As soon as the decision was known, the Gondreville Mystery passed out of people's minds; amid political events of the highest importance it was soon forgotten. Society, like the sea, finds its level, and falls back into its way again after an upheaval. All trace of a disaster is soon effaced by the fluctuation of moving interests.

Laurence would have given way in those days if it had not been for her firmness of character, and her conviction that her cousins were innocent. She surprised M. de Granville and Bordin by the apparent calmness with which noble natures face the worst. She nursed Madame d'Hauteserre, sitting up with her at night, and every day she spent two hours in the jail. She would marry one of her cousins, she said, when they went to the convicts' prison.

"The convicts' prison!" repeated Bordin. "Why, mademoiselle, there is but one thing to think of now; we must petition the Emperor to pardon them."

"Pardon? and from a Bonaparte?" Laurence cried out in horror.

The worthy old *procureur's* spectacles took a leap from his nose, but he caught them, and took a look at this girl that had grown to a woman all at once. Her character was fully revealed to him. He turned and caught the Marquis de Chargebœuf by the arm.

"My lord Marquis, let us hurry to Paris," he said, "and save them without her!"

The petitions sent up by the MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre and by Michu stood first on the list for the new Court of Cassation. Happily the decision was delayed by the inaugural ceremonies.

Toward the end of the month of September, after three hearings of the pleadings, and of the attorney-general Merlin, who appeared in person, the appeal was dismissed. Meanwhile, the Imperial Court of Paris was instituted. M. de Granville received the appointment of deputy attorney-general; and as the department of the Aube came within the jurisdiction of that court, he found it impossible in his official

position to take the necessary steps for the condemned prisoners. But he wearied out his patron Cambacérès. Bordin and M. de Chargebœuf went to his house in the Marais on the day after the decision of the Court of Cassation, and found him in the honeymoon, for he had married in the meantime. But in spite of these various changes, M. de Chargebœuf saw clearly, from the young barrister's distress, that he was true to his clients. There are lawyers, and these are the artists of their profession, who take a case for a mistress. But this does not often happen; the reader had better not count upon it.

So soon as M. de Granville's ex-clients were alone with him in his private room, he turned to the Marquis.

"I did not expect your visit," he said; "I have used up all my credit already. Do not try to save Michu; you will only obtain pardon for the MM. de Simeuse. Somebody must suffer."

"Good Lord!" cried Bordin, holding up the three appeals to mercy, "how am I to take it upon myself to withhold your old client's demand? If I throw this paper on the fire, I might as well cut off his head."

He held out Michu's signature. M. de Granville took it up and looked at it.

"We cannot withdraw it," he said, "but mind this: if you ask pardon for all, you will get nothing."

"Have we time to consult Michu?" asked Bordin.

"Yes. The order for an execution is issued by the attorney-general's staff; we can give you a few days' delay. Men are murdered," he added, with a touch of something like bitterness, "but there are certain forms to be observed, especially at Paris."

M. de Chargebœuf had already been to the Chief Justiciary, and recollections of what he had said gave great weight to M. de Granville's bitter words.

"Michu is not guilty," continued M. de Granville; "I know it, and I say so; but what can one man do by himself with every one against him? And recollect that I am bound now

to be silent. It is my duty to raise the scaffold on which my client's head is to fall."

M. de Chargebœuf knew enough of Laurence to feel sure that she would not consent to save her cousins at Michu's expense. So the Marquis tried one last expedient. He had asked for an audience of the Minister of Foreign Relations, to discover whether diplomacy in high quarters might not afford a way of escape. He went with Bordin, who knew the Minister and had been of service to him several times. They found Talleyrand absorbed in the contemplation of the fire, his feet stretched out before him, his head on his hand, and his elbow on the table. A newspaper lay on the floor. He had just been reading the decision of the Court of Cassation.

"Please sit down, M. le Marquis," said the Minister. "And you, Bordin" (indicating a place opposite him at the table), "write——"

"SIRE,—Four innocent gentlemen, declared guilty by the jury, have just been informed that their appeal is dismissed by your Majesty's Court of Cassation.

"Your Imperial Majesty can only extend mercy to them. The four gentlemen only ask this favor of your august clemency that they may find an occasion of turning their deaths to account in your Majesty's service, by fighting under your eyes, and declare themselves to be respectfully your Imperial and Royal Majesty's" etc. . . .

"Only princes can confer such obligations as this," said the Marquis de Chargebœuf, taking the precious draft of the memorial from Bordin's hands, and vowing inwardly to obtain august support for it.

"The lives of your relatives hang on the fortune of war, M. le Marquis," said the Minister. "Try to time your interview with the Emperor after a victory, and they will be saved."

Talleyrand took up the pen and wrote a confidential letter to the Emperor, and a dozen lines for Marshal Duroc. Then

he rang the bell and asked his secretary for a diplomatic passport.

"What is your real opinion of this affair?" he asked, quietly turning to Bordin.

"Then do you not know, monseigneur, who has entangled us so thoroughly?"

"I think I do, but I have my reasons for wishing to make sure," returned the Prince. Then, turning to the Marquis de Chargebœuf, he added, "Go to Troyes. Bring back the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne with you here to-morrow at this time; but no one must know of her arrival. Go to Madame de Talleyrand's apartments; I will prepare her for your visit. Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne shall be placed where she can see a man who will stand in front of me. If she recognizes in him an agent who made the domiciliary visit at Cinq-Cygne, in the time of the conspiracy of MM. de Polignac and de Rivière,—then not a word! not a gesture! whatever I may say or he may answer. Lastly, you must not think of saving any one but the MM. de Simeuse and d'Hauteserre; do not try to hamper yourselves with your scapegrace of a gamekeeper."

"A hero, monseigneur!" cried Bordin.

"What! enthusiasm! and in *you,* Bordin? The man must be something indeed!—Our sovereign lord, M. le Marquis, is prodigiously vain; he will dismiss me before long, to carry out his follies without contradiction. He is a great soldier that can control the laws of time and space; but he cannot change men's natures, and he would like to mould them to his uses. Now, do not forget that your relatives' pardon can only be obtained by one person, and that person is Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne."

The Marquis went over to Troyes, alone, and told Laurence how things stood. Laurence obtained permission to see Michu, from the attorney-general. The Marquis went with her as far as the gate of the prison and waited for her outside. When she came out her eyes were full of tears.

"Poor fellow, he tried to kneel to beg me not to give him

another thought, and forgot the irons on his feet," she broke out. "Oh! Marquis, I will plead his cause. Yes, I will kiss their Emperor's boot. And if I fail, Michu shall live for ever in our family; I will see to that. Present the petition for mercy, to gain time; I must have his picture. . . . Let us go."

Next day, when the Minister knew by a preconcerted signal that Laurence was at her post, he rang his bell, and the attendant received orders to introduce M. Corentin.

"You are a clever man, my dear fellow, and I wish to employ you," said Talleyrand.

"My lord——"

"Listen. In Fouché's service you will make money, but you will never gain honor nor a position; but if you continue to serve me as you did just now at Berlin, you will be respected."

"You are very good, my lord——"

"You showed genius in that last business, at Gondreville."

"Of what do you speak, monseigneur?" asked Corentin, neither over-indifferent nor too much surprised.

"Monsieur," the Minister returned drily, "you will never be anything; you are afraid——"

"Of what, monseigneur?"

"Of death!" said the Minister, in those rich, deep, hollow tones of his. "Good-day, my dear fellow."

"It is the man," said the Marquis de Chargebœuf, coming into the room, "but we have all but killed the Countess; she is speechless with anger."

"Nobody else could play such a trick," said the Minister.—"There is a chance, my lord Marquis," continued he, "that your plans may miscarry. Set out as if you intend to go by way of Strasbourg. I will have your passports made out in duplicate, and in the second, the route shall be left blank. Have doubles, change your direction adroitly, and, more important still, change your traveling carriage; leave your doubles to be stopped at Strasbourg in your stead, and travel by way of Switzerland and Bavaria to Prussia. Not a word

to any one, and be careful. You have to do with the police; you do not know what the police is!"

Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne offered Robert Lefebvre a sum sufficient to induce him to come to Troyes to paint Michu's portrait; and M. de Granville undertook to give the famous painter of the day all possible facilities. M. de Chargebœuf set out in the old *berlingot* with Laurence and a man-servant who could speak German. But Mademoiselle Goujet and Gothard had started ahead of them in an excellent calèche, and near Nancy the two parties met, and exchanged carriages. At Strasbourg, accordingly, the commissary of police refused his *visa* to the travelers' passport, pleading strict orders. And at that very moment, Laurence and the Marquis left France behind, showing their passports at Besançon.

Laurence crossed Switzerland in early October, without paying the slightest heed to the wonderful scenery through which she traveled. She lay back in the carriage in the torpor that creeps over the condemned man, when he knows that the hour is come. In such hours, all the world is shut out by an eddying mist, and every commonplace thing wears a strange, unfamiliar aspect. The thought, "If I fail, they will die by their own hands in prison," beat in upon her brain, as the blow of the headsman's club falls on the limbs of the victim broken on the wheel. She felt more and more exhausted; she lost all her energy in the suspense as the cruel, swift, decisive moment drew nearer, when she should be face to face with the man on whom the four lives depended. She had made up her mind to give way to languor in the interval, so as to save all her strength. These calculations of a strong nature manifest themselves in different ways. Some loftier souls find relief in unexpected gayety during the supreme hour of suspense. The Marquis could not understand Laurence's mood. Sometimes he feared that he might not bring her alive to an audience, solemn only for the suppliants, yet surely it assumed proportions beyond those of ordinary private life. For Laurence, the thought that she must humble herself to the man

whom she scorned and hated, meant the death of all generous sentiments within her.

"The Laurence that lives on afterwards will be a different creature from this Laurence that is about to die," she thought.

Still, it was very difficult for the travelers to shut their eyes to the great general movement which they felt so soon as they crossed the Prussian frontier. The Jena campaign had begun. Laurence and the Marquis saw the magnificent divisions of the French army passed in review, and deploying here as at the Tuileries. Seen through the pomp and splendor of war,—a splendor that can only be described in biblical language,—the man whose spirit moved those masses of men loomed like a giant in Laurence's imagination. Before long the word victory rang in her ears. The Imperial troops had gained two signal advantages. Prince Frederick Louis of Prussia had been killed at Saalfeld the day before the travelers reached it in their effort to overtake Napoleon's lightning speed.

At last, on the 13th of October, that day of evil augury, Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's traveling carriage overtook the main body of the army, and drove along by a river through the middle of the camp. She saw nothing but confusion. They were sent from village to village, from division to division, until she grew alarmed to think that she and the old man with her were drifting hither and thither alone in an ocean of a hundred and fifty thousand men, facing a hundred and fifty thousand of the enemy. Tired of seeing the line of river over the hedge-row by the muddy road along the slope, which they were following, she asked the soldier what it was called.

"The Saale," he answered, and he pointed out the great masses of the Prussian army on the other side.

Night came on. Laurence saw the watch-fires lighted, and the glitter of steel. The old Marquis with chivalrous courage mounted the box-seat beside the new servant, and himself drove the two strong horses purchased the day before. He knew that he should find neither horses nor postilions on a field of battle. The army wondered at the audacious carriage, till a field gendarme brought it to a stand, and rode down upon the Marquis, shouting:

"Who are you? Where are you going? Whom do you want?"

"The Emperor," replied the Marquis de Chargebœuf. "I have an important despatch from the cabinet for Grand Marshal Duroc."

"Very well. You cannot stop here," said the man. But Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and the Marquis were obliged to stop, and so much the more so because it was growing dark.

"Where are we?" Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne asked of two officers who came past, their uniforms hidden by plain greatcoats.

"You are in advance of the French advanced guard, madame," returned one of the officers. "You cannot stay here, for if the enemy moves our batteries will begin to play; you will be between two fires."

"Oh!" she said indifferently.

At the sound of that "oh!" the other officer spoke.

"How comes this woman to be here?"

"We are waiting for a gendarme," said Laurence; "he has gone to announce our arrival to M. Duroc, who will use his influence to obtain an interview with the Emperor for us."

"An interview with the Emperor!" . . . exclaimed the first officer. "Can you think of it on the eve of a decisive engagement?"

"Ah! you are right," she said. "I should wait till the day after to-morrow. Victory will soften him."

The two officers moved away twenty paces toward the horses that were standing quietly, waiting for them to mount; and the calèche was forthwith surrounded by an extremely brilliant array of marshals and officers, who respected the carriage precisely because it was standing there.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the Marquis, "I am afraid that we were speaking to the Emperor."

"The Emperor?" repeated a colonel-general, "why, there he is!"

Then Laurence saw him a few paces away, alone and in front of the others. The officer who exclaimed, "How comes this wo-

man to be here," was the Emperor himself, in a green uniform covered by his famous greatcoat. He had mounted a richly caparisoned white horse, and now with a field-glass in his hand he was intently studying the Prussian army beyond the Saale. Laurence knew why the calèche was allowed to remain and why the Emperor's escort respected it. A sudden revulsion passed through her. The hour had come. But at that moment she heard the dull heavy sound of a moving battery and the tramp of masses of men advancing in quick time, and the guns were put in position on the plateau. The batteries seemed to have a language of their own; the caissons vibrated; the metal gleamed.

"Marshal Lannes and his whole corps to the front! Marshal Lefebvre and the Guard to occupy the summit!" said the other officer—Major-General Berthier.

The Emperor dismounted. At the first sign, his favorite Mameluke Roustan ran forward to hold the horse. Laurence was stupid with astonishment. She could not believe that all this could happen so simply.

"I shall spend the night here on the plateau," said the Emperor.

As he spoke, Grand Marshal Duroc, whom the gendarme at last had managed to find, came up to the Marquis de Chargebœuf and asked the reason of his arrival. The Marquis replied that a letter from the Minister of Foreign Relations would explain how urgently necessary it was that he and Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne should obtain an audience of the Emperor.

"His Majesty is about to dine in his bivouac, no doubt," said Duroc, as he took the letter. "I will see what it is all about and let you know if it can be done.—Corporal! go with this carriage and lead the way to the hut in the rear."

M. de Chargebœuf followed the field gendarme and came to a stand before a miserable hut built of earth and wood. A few fruit-trees grew about the place, which was guarded by pickets of horse and foot.

Seen from the top of the hill the majesty of war might be

said to shine out in all its grandeur, for the lines of both armies lay out below in the moonlight. An hour went by, amid continual coming and going of aides-de-camp, till Duroc came himself and made Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne and the Marquis enter the hut. The floor was of trampled earth like a barn floor. Dinner had just been removed from the table, at which Napoleon was sitting on a rough chair by a smoky fire of green wood. It was plain from his muddy boots that he had been riding about across country. He had taken off his famous greatcoat, and wore the well-known green uniform with the broad red ribbon, set off by white kerseymere breeches and a white waistcoat, a costume that set off his pale, stern Cæsar's face to advantage. His hand lay on a map unfolded over his knees. Berthier, in the brilliant costume of a Vice-Constable of the Empire, stood behind him, and Constant, his body-servant, was handing the Emperor his cup of coffee on a tray.

"What do you want?" he asked, with affected bluntness; and a glance like a shaft of light seemed to look Laurence through and through. "So you are not afraid now to speak to me before the battle? . . . What is it about?"

"Sire," she said, looking back as steadily at him, "I am Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne."

"Well?" returned the Emperor sharply, thinking that the glance meant defiance.

"Do you not understand? I am the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, and I ask for mercy," she said, kneeling as she held out the memorial drawn up by Talleyrand, with footnotes by the Empress, Cambacérès, and Malin.

The Emperor graciously raised the kneeling girl, saying with a shrewd glance:

"Will you be good now? Do you understand what the French Empire ought to be?"

"Ah! just at this moment I understand nothing but the Emperor," she said, overcome by the debonair manner in which this controller of fate spoke the words that hinted at pardon.

"Are they innocent?" asked the Emperor.

"All of them," she cried passionately.

"All? Ah! no. The gamekeeper is a dangerous character; he might kill my Senator without asking your leave——"

"Sire!" she exclaimed, "if you had a friend that had devoted himself to you, would you desert him? Would not you——"

"You are a woman," he interrupted, with a trace of banter in his voice.

"And you are a man of iron!" she cried, with an impassioned harshness that pleased him.

"The man has been condemned after a fair trial," he continued.

"But he is not guilty."

"Child! . . ." said the Emperor. He took Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne by the hand, and led her out upon the plateau. Then he spoke with that eloquence of his that could turn cowards into brave men.

"There!" he said, "there are three hundred thousand men,—they, too, are guiltless. Well, and by this time to-morrow, thirty thousand men will have died, and died for their country. Perhaps among the Prussians yonder there is some great mechanician, some man with ideas in his head, some genius, to be mown down to-morrow. And we, too, on our side, shall surely lose great men that will die unrecognized. I myself, perhaps, may see my best friend fall.—Shall I cry out against God? No. I shall be silent.—Bear this in mind, mademoiselle, that a man is as much bound to die for the laws of his country, as to die here for glory," he added, leading the way into the hut. —"Now, go back to France," he said, turning to the Marquis, "my orders will follow you thither."

Laurence believed that Michu's punishment was to be commuted, and, in a great outpouring of gratitude, she knelt and kissed the Emperor's hand.

"You are M. de Chargebœuf, are you not?" said the Emperor, confronting the Marquis.

"Yes, Sire."

"Have you a family?"

"A large family."

"Why should you not give me one of your grandsons? He should be one of my pages. . . ."

("Ah!" thought Laurence, "the sub-lieutenant peeps out; he means to be paid for his pardon.")

The Marquis bowed for all reply; but luckily General Rapp came hurrying in at that very moment.

"Sire, the horse-guards and the Grand Duke of Berg's cavalry cannot come up to-morrow before noon."

"It is of no consequence," said Napoleon, addressing Berthier; "for us, too, there are propitious moments, let us turn them to account."

At a sign of dismissal, Laurence and the Marquis withdrew to the carriage. The corporal set them on their way, and escorted them to a village where they passed the night. Next day they traveled further and further from the field of battle, to the sound of eight hundred cannon that thundered incessantly for ten hours. The tidings of the wonderful victory of Jena overtook them by the way. A week later, they reached the suburbs of Troyes. An order from the Chief Justiciary, sent through the attorney-general attached to the Court of First Instance at Troyes, directed that the four gentlemen should be set at liberty on bail, pending the decision of his Majesty, Emperor and King; but at the same time, a second order for Michu's execution was sent down by the head of the staff of counsel for the prosecution. The news had arrived that very morning. Laurence went forthwith to the prison. It was two o'clock. She had not changed her traveling dress. She gained permission to stay with Michu through the last sad ceremony called "the toilet." The Abbé Goujet, good man, had asked leave to go with Michu to the scaffold. Absolution had just been given, and Michu was lamenting that he must die without knowing what would become of his masters. So when Laurence came in, he gave a cry of joy.

"I can die now!" said he.

"They are pardoned; I do not know the conditions, but

they are pardoned," returned Laurence. "And I left nothing untried to save you, my friend, in spite of their advice. I thought I had saved you, but the Emperor deceived me with his royal graciousness."

"It was decreed above that the watch-dog should die on the same spot as his old master and mistress," said Michu.

The last hour went by very quickly. When it was time to leave the prison Michu ventured only to raise Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne's hand to his lips; but she held up her face for the noble victim's solemn kiss.

Michu refused to ride in the cart.

"The innocent ought to go afoot," he said.

Nor would he allow the Abbé Goujet to lend his arm; he walked with dignity and resolution to the scaffold. As he lay on the plank he spoke to the executioner, asking the man to turn back the collar of his coat, which covered his neck.

"My clothes belong to you," he said; "try to keep it clean."

The four gentlemen had scarcely time to see Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne. An orderly came from the general in command of the division, bringing sub-lieutenants' commissions for them all in the same regiment of cavalry, together with orders to repair at once to the depot at Bayonne. There were heartrending farewells, for all of them had some foreboding of the future, and Laurence went back to her desolate château.

The twin brothers fell together under the Emperor's eyes at Somosierra, the one defending the other. Their last words were—"Laurence, *Cy meurs!*"

Both had reached the rank of major. Robert d'Hauteserre fell as a colonel in the attack on the redoubt at Borodino, and his brother took his place.

After the battle of Dresden Adrien became a brigadier-general; but he was badly wounded, and came home to Cinq-Cygne to be nursed. And then it was that the Countess, a woman of two and thirty, married Adrien d'Hauteserre to save the last of the four nobles who had once been around her.

She had only a blighted heart to give, but he took it, as those who love can take, doubting nothing, when they have not lost faith altogether.

The Restoration roused no enthusiasm in Laurence. For her the Bourbons came back too late. Yet she had no reason to complain; her husband became a peer of France, with the title of Marquis de Cinq-Cygne, he received the appointment of lieutenant-general in 1816, and was rewarded by the blue ribbon for conspicuous services then rendered to the cause.

Laurence brought up Michu's son as if he had been her own child. He was called to the bar in 1827; and after two years' practice, was nominated assistant judge in the tribunal at Alençon, and subsequently became attorney for the crown at the Arcis tribunal. Laurence had invested Michu's capital. She handed over *rentes* bringing in an income of twelve thousand livres to the young man when he came of age; and afterwards arranged a marriage between him and a rich heiress—Mademoiselle Girel of Troyes.

In 1829, the Marquis de Cinq-Cygne died in Laurence's arms; his father, and mother, and children, who idolized him, were about him at the last. At the time of his death, no one had succeeded in penetrating the secret. How the Senator was kidnapped remained a mystery. Louis XVIII. by no means refused to make reparation for the injury done by the affair, but on the subject of its causes he was dumb; and thenceforth the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne was persuaded that the King was implicated in the catastrophe.

CONCLUSION

THE late Marquis de Cinq-Cygne had invested his own savings and those of his father and mother in the purchase of a splendid mansion in the Rue de Faubourg du Roule. The house formed a part of a considerable estate entailed for the maintenance of the title. This explained the economy practised by the Marquis and his relatives till it became a sordid parsimony which often grieved Laurence. So after the purchase was completed, the Marquise ceased to live entirely on her estates (where she hoarded money for her children), and spent the winters in town the more willingly because her daughter Berthe and her son Paul had reached an age when their education required the resources of Paris. Madame de Cinq-Cygne went very little into society. Her husband could not fail to know that she always carried regrets in her heart; but for her he showed the most ingenious delicacy, and died, having loved but the one woman in the world. To that noble, so long slighted heart, the generous daughter of the Cinq-Cygnes returned as much love as she received during the last years of their life together; and Adrien was completely happy after all.

Laurence lives now for the joys of family life. No woman in Paris is more loved and respected by her friends. To visit at her house is an honor. Gentle, indulgent, intelligent, and what is more, simple, she charms all finer and rarer natures, and attracts them to herself, in spite of the trace of sadness in her manner. Each of her friends seems to himself to protect a woman so really strong; and perhaps in that secret attitude of protector lies the charm of her friendships. The evening of Laurence's life is fair and serene after her sad and troubled youth. People know what she has passed through.

Nobody has ever asked a question about a portrait, painted by Robert Lefebvre, on her drawing-room wall, its principal sad ornament since the keeper's death on the scaffold. Laurence's face wears the look of a hardly attained maturity, as of fruit ripened in spite of difficulties. Something like religious courage crowns the brows that have emerged from many trials.

The Marquise de Cinq-Cygne's fortune, increased by the law of indemnity, amounts to two hundred thousand livres a year, without taking her husband's income into account. She had inherited the eleven hundred thousand francs left by the Simeuses. Thenceforward she spent a hundred thousand francs per annum, and saved the rest for Berthe's dowry.

Berthe is the living portrait of her mother, with none of her daring spirit; she is her mother over again, grown dainty, sprightly, "more feminine," as Laurence says with a sigh. The Marquise would not hear of a marriage for her daughter till Berthe was twenty years old. The savings of the family had been judiciously invested by old d'Hauteserre when the funds suddenly fell in 1830, so that by the time Berthe was twenty years old, in 1833, her portion amounted to eighty thousand francs a year.

About that time the Princesse de Cadignan, wishing to marry her son, the Duc de Maufrigneuse, had gained an intimate footing for him in the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne's house. For some months past Georges de Maufrigneuse had dined three times a week at the Hôtel Cinq-Cygne. He escorted the mother and daughter to the Italiens, he caracoled about their carriage in the Bois. It was plain to the Faubourg Saint Germain that Georges was in love with Berthe, but no one could find out whether Madame de Cinq-Cygne wished her daughter to be a duchess until such time as she should be a princess, or whether it was the Princess who would fain secure so fine a fortune for her son. Was the celebrated Diane making advances to the country noblesse? Or were the provincial noblesse dismayed by Madame de Cadignan's celebrity, or frightened by her tastes and ruinous life?

The Princess had grown devout. In her anxiety to do noth-

ing to injure her son's prospects, she immured herself in private life, and spent the summer in a villa at Geneva.

One evening, the Marquise d'Espard and de Marsay, president of the council, were both at the Princesse de Cadignan's. She saw her old lover that night for the last time, for he died during the following year. Others were there besides. Rastignac, under secretary of state to de Marsay, a couple of ambassadors, one or two celebrated orators still left in the House of Peers, the old Ducs de Lenoncourt and de Navarreins, the Comte de Vandenesse and his young wife, and d'Arthez formed a strangely assorted circle, though it would be easy to account for their presence. It was a question of obtaining a pass for the Prince de Cadignan, from the Prime Minister, and de Marsay, unwilling to take the responsibility of granting the permit, had come to tell the Princess that the matter was in good hands. An old political hand was to bring a solution of the difficulty in the course of the evening.

The Marquise and Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne were announced. Laurence, who never wavered in her principles, was not so much surprised as shocked to find the foremost representatives of the Legitimist cause in either house talking and laughing with the prime minister of a sovereign whom she always spoke of as "Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans." De Marsay, like a failing lamp, shone brilliantly at the last; he was glad to forget political anxieties for a little while. The Marquise de Cinq-Cygne, however, tolerated de Marsay very much as the Austrian court had just accepted M. de Saint-Aulaire—the man of the world made the minister passable; but when M. le Comte de Gondreville was announced she rose as though her chair had been heated red-hot.

"Good-bye, madame," she said stiffly, addressing the Princess; and went, taking Berthe with her, picking her way across the room so as to avoid any encounter with a man so fatal to her.

"You have perhaps broken off Georges' marriage," the Princess murmured for de Marsay's benefit.

Malin, the lawyer's clerk from Arcis, the Representative of the People, the Thermidorean, the tribune, the state councillor, count and senator under the Emperor, the peer of France by a grant of Louis XVIII., and one of the new peers of July, now made an obsequious bow to the Princesse de Cadignan.

"You need tremble no longer, fair lady, lest we wage war against princes," said he, taking a seat beside her.

Malin had enjoyed the esteem of Louis XVIII., for his long experience had been useful to that monarch. He had contributed not a little to Decaze's overthrow, and Villèle had received the full benefit of his counsels. As Charles X. gave him a cool reception, however, he had thought fit to adopt Talleyrand's grudge. He was now in high favor with the twelfth government under which he had served and would probably one day dis-serve. His friendship with one of our most famous diplomatists—a friendship of thirty-six years' standing—had come to an end during the past fifteen months. It was during the course of this evening that he made an epigram at the expense of the great politician.

"Do you know why he is hostile to the Duc de Bordeaux? . . . The claimant is too young——"

"You are giving singular counsel to young men," remarked Rastignac.

De Marsay had grown very thoughtful since the Princess spoke. He took no part in the lively conversation, but sat quietly watching Gondreville. The old man always went to bed early, and de Marsay was evidently waiting for him to go. The rest of the party followed de Marsay's example; they had seen Madame de Cinq-Cygne leave the room and knew her reasons for so doing. Gondreville had not noticed the Marquise, nor did he understand the cause of the general reserve; but business and political life had taught him tact, and he was, besides, quick-witted. Thinking that he was in the way, the old man of seventy took his leave and walked slowly to the door.

De Marsay, standing by the hearth, watched him go with an expression that suggested grave thoughts.

"I did wrong, madame, when I omitted to give you the name of any negotiator," the Prime Minister said at last when the carriage had rolled away. "But I will redeem my fault, and put it in your power to make your peace with the Cinq-Cygnes. These things happened more than thirty years ago. It is as old a story as the death of Henri Quatre; though in truth between ourselves, and in spite of the proverb, that story (like a good many more tragedies in history) is known to scarcely any one. I vow and declare, at any rate, that even if this affair did not concern the Marquise, it would be none the less interesting; for as a matter of fact it throws a light on a famous passage in our modern annals,—the passage of the Mont Saint Bernard. MM. les Ambassadeurs will see that in the matter of depth our latter-day politicians are very far removed from the Machiavellis who were raised on high above the region of storms by the popular upheaval of 1793. Some of these have latterly 'found a port,' as novelists say. You must have been tossed through the hurricanes of those times if you would be anything in France to-day."

"But it seems to me," smiled the Princess, "that in that respect your state of things at present leaves nothing to be desired——"

A little burst of polite laughter followed this speech; de Marsay could not help smiling. The ambassadors seemed to be listening eagerly. A sudden fit of coughing seized de Marsay, and the rest were silent.

"One night in June, 1800," the Prime Minister began, "just as the light of the candles grew faint in the dawn, two men in the salon of the Hôtel of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, grew tired of bouillotte (perhaps they had only been playing to amuse others), and withdrew to a boudoir. The Hôtel used to be in the Rue du Bac in those days. As for those two men (one of them is dead now, and the other has *one* foot in the grave), each was in his way as extraordinary as the other. Both had taken holy orders, and subsequently both married. One had been a simple Oratorian, the other

had worn a mitre. The name of the first was Fouché, I do not tell you who the second was; but at that time they were both simple French citizens, and neither of them particularly simple.

"The rest of the party left in the salon saw them go, and looked up somewhat curiously. A third man followed. This personage thought himself much cleverer than the first pair; his name was Sieyès; and as you all know, before the Revolution he too belonged to the Church. The lame man was at that time Minister of Foreign Relations. Fouché was Minister of General Police; Sieyès had been consul and had abdicated.

"A phlegmatic, stern little man next left his place, remarking aloud (so I was told by some one who heard him)—'I have my fears of a triplet of priests.' This was the Minister of War. Carnot's remark apparently caused no anxiety to the two consuls over their game at cards in the salon. Cambacérès and Lebrun were at the mercy of their ministers, and their ministers were infinitely cleverer men than they. The statesmen of that time are now nearly all of them dead, there is no occasion to spare them; they belong to the province of history, and the history made that night was terrible. I tell you this, because I alone know about it; for Louis XVIII. told poor Madame de Cinq-Cygne nothing, and the present Government has no interest in discovering the truth.

"The four politicians sat down. Before they had had time to say a word, the lame man shut the door. Some say he drew the bolt (there is no one like a well-bred man for thinking of these little things). The three priests' haggard, impassive faces looked as you have always seen them. Carnot's was the only high-colored countenance among them. The soldier was the first to speak.

" 'What is in question?'

" 'France,' the Prince might have said. (I admire the Prince as one of the most extraordinary men of our time.)

" 'The Republic,' Fouché certainly would have said.

" 'Power,' was probably Sieyès' reply."

De Marsay's rendering of the three speakers was so admirably perfect in tones, expressions, and gestures, that his audience exchanged glances.

"The three priests understood one another uncommonly well," he continued. "Carnot probably looked at his colleagues and the ex-consul with dignity enough; but I think he must have felt nonplussed in his own mind.

" 'Do you believe in a success?' Sieyès asked him.

" 'Anything may be expected of Bonaparte,' returned the Minister of War. 'He crossed the Alps safely.'

" 'At the present moment,' remarked the diplomatist, with measured slowness, 'he is staking his all.'

" 'In short, let us speak out,' said Fouché. 'What are we going to do, if the First Consul is beaten? Is it possible to reconstitute an army? Are we to remain his humble servants?'

" 'There is no Republic, now,' suggested Sieyès; 'he is Consul for ten years.'

" 'He has more power than Cromwell had, and he did not vote for the King's death,' added the Bishop.

" 'We have a master,' said Fouché. 'Shall we keep him in power if he loses the battle? Or shall we return to a purely Republican Government?'

" 'France can only hold out if she recovers the energy of the time of the Convention,' Carnot remarked sententiously.

" 'I am of Carnot's opinion," said Sieyès. "If Bonaparte is defeated, and comes back, there must be an end of him. He has had too much to say these seven months past.'

" 'He has the army,' Carnot said thoughtfully.

" 'We shall have the people!' cried Fouché.

" 'You are prompt, sir!' remarked the *grand seigneur,* and at the sound of that deep, resonant voice the Oratorian shrank into himself.

" 'Let us speak out,' said a fifth person, a member of the old Convention, who now showed his face. 'Let us speak out. If Bonaparte wins the day, we will bow before him. If he loses, we will bury him.'

"'You were here, Malin,' said the master of the house quite imperturbably; 'you will be one of us.' And he beckoned the newcomer to a seat. It was owing to this circumstance that a sufficiently obscure member of the Convention became what he is even at this moment, as we have just seen. Malin was discreet, and the two ministers stood by him; but he was both the pivot of the machinery and the soul of their machinations.

"'The man is not by any means defeated yet!' Carnot exclaimed in a tone of conviction, 'and he has just outdone Hannibal.'

"'In case of misfortune, *here* is the Directory,' Sieyès returned, very acutely pointing out as he spoke that they were five in number.

"'And it is to the interest of each of us to maintain the French Republic,' added the Minister of Foreign Relations; 'three of us have thrown the cassock to the dogs, and the General voted for the King's death. As for you' (turning to Malin)' 'you own *émigrés*' estates.'

"'Our interests are all the same,' Sieyès affirmed peremptorily, 'and our interests are also the interests of the country.'

"'A rare coincidence,' smiled the diplomatist.

"'Action is imperative,' added Fouché. 'The battle is being fought and Melas' forces are superior. Genoa has surrendered, and Masséna has blundered into embarking for Antibes. So it is not certain that he can effect a junction, and Bonaparte in that case will be thrown on his own resources.'

"'Who told you the news?' asked Carnot.

"'It is sure news,' returned Fouché. 'You shall have the despatches in time for the Bourse.'"

De Marsay stopped for a moment. "They did not mince matters among themselves," he remarked smiling.

"'Now, when the news of the disaster comes,' Fouché went on, 'it will be no time for organizing the clubs, appealing to patriotism, and making changes in the Constitution. Our 18th of Brumaire ought to be ready by then.'

"'Let us leave the Minister of Police to do it,' suggested the diplomatist, 'and we must beware of Lucien.' (Lucien Bonaparte was at that time Minister of the Interior.)

"'I can hold him in,' said Fouché.

"'Gentlemen!' exclaimed Sieyès, 'our Directory shall not be at the mercy of anarchy and change. We will organize an oligarchy, a senate composed of life members, an elective assembly in our control. For we must profit by the mistakes of the past.'

"'With that system I shall have a quiet life,' said the Bishop.

"'Find a man that we can trust with the correspondence with Moreau; for the Army of Germany will be our one resource!' cried Carnot, deep in thought."

De Marsay paused. "In truth, these men were right, gentlemen!" he said. "They behaved like great men in the crisis; and I should have done as they did.

"'Gentlemen!' . . . exclaimed Sieyès in stern, solemn tones.

"Every one present understood perfectly well what was meant by that word 'gentlemen.' The same promise, the same loyalty, could be read in all their faces; a promise of absolute silence and complete solidarity in case Bonaparte should return in triumph.

"'We all of us know what we have to do,' added Fouché.

"Sieyès meanwhile had slipped the bolt noiselessly back. His priest's ear had served him well. Lucien came in.

"'Good news, gentlemen! A courier has brought Madame Bonaparte a few words from the First Consul. He has made a beginning with a victory at Montebello.'

"The three ministers looked in each other's faces.

"'Was it a general engagement?' asked Carnot.

"'No, a battle. Lannes covered himself with glory. It was a bloody encounter. Lannes with ten thousand men was attacked by eighteen thousand, and saved by a division that came up to his support. Ott is in full flight. In fact, Melas' line of operations has been cut.'

"'When did this take place?' asked Carnot.

"'On the 8th,' Lucien replied.

"'And this is the 13th,' returned the sagacious Minister. 'Well, to all appearance the fate of France is staked on the fortune of war at this moment.' (And as a matter of fact the battle of Marengo began at daybreak on the 14th of June.)

"'Four days of mortal suspense!' said Lucien.

"'Mortal?' the Minister of Foreign Relations repeated coolly with a questioning look.

"'Four days,' said Fouché.

"An eye-witness assured me that the two consuls only heard the news when the six men returned to the salon. It was then four o'clock in the morning.

"Fouché was the first to go. His was a profound and extraordinary genius, working in the shadow, and little known; yet he was an equal surely of a Philip II., a Tiberius, or a Borgia. He behaved after the Walcheren affair like a consummate tactician, a great statesman, and a far-sighted administrator. He was the one minister that Napoleon had; and you know that he alarmed Napoleon at the time of which I speak. Fouché, Masséna, and the Prince are the three greatest men, the three wisest heads, that I know in diplomacy, war, and government. If Napoleon had frankly associated them with his work there would be no Europe now, but a vast French empire instead. Fouché only became estranged from Napoleon when he saw Sieyès and the Prince de Talleyrand set aside.

"This was what he did, working beneath the surface with infernal activity. In the space of three days, without showing his hand, he stirred up the ashes and organized that general agitation which hung over the whole of France and revived the Republican energy of 1793.

"As some light must be thrown on this dark corner of our story, I must tell you that all the Republican plots against the life of the victor of Marengo may be traced to this agitation. It was the work of a man who held all the threads

of the dispersed party of the Mountain. The consciousness of the harm that he had done gave Fouché firmness sufficient to point out to Bonaparte that, contrary to the opinion of the latter, there were more Republicans than Royalists mixed up in these plots.

"Fouché understood men to admiration. He counted upon Sieyès because Sieyès' ambition had been disappointed; upon Talleyrand because the prince was a *grand seigneur;* upon Carnot, because he knew Carnot's profound honesty; but he had his fears of our man of to-night, and this was how he set about committing him. Malin was only Malin in those days, and Malin was in correspondence with Louis XVIII. The Minister of Police accordingly set Malin to draft the proclamations of the Revolutionary government, with its enactments and decrees. Factious persons who took part in the 18th of Brumaire were declared outlaws. And more, far more than this, the unwilling accomplice was obliged to have the necessary quantity of placards printed, and to store them in packages in his own house. The printer was arrested as a conspirator (for a Revolutionary printer had been purposely chosen), and the police kept him for a couple of months before they set him at liberty. The man died in 1816 in the firm belief that there had been a conspiracy set afoot by the Mountain.

"One of the most curious pieces of acting on the part of Fouché's police was, beyond question, the scene after the arrival of the first courier with the news of the loss of the battle of Marengo. The first banker of the day had an agent at the seat of war. The battle went against Napoleon, as you may remember, until about seven o'clock in the evening. At noon the banker's agent considered that the French army was hopelessly lost, and hastened to despatch a courier. The Minister of Police had sent for bill-posters and criers; and a trusty adherent had arrived with a wagon-load of the printed bills, when the courier, sent off in the evening, using his utmost diligence, arrived with the news of a victory that sent France fairly frantic with joy.

"Heavy sums were lost on the Bourse. But the army of bill-posters and criers were bidden to wait till the placards extolling the victory and the First Consul could be printed, and they published these instead of the proclamation of outlawry and the political death of Bonaparte.

"Malin knew that the whole responsibility of the plot was sure to fall on his shoulders. He was so frightened that he carted the packages of printed matter down to Gondreville by night, and no doubt he buried the unlucky papers in the cellars of the château that he had bought here under the name of another man,—he nominated him as president of a Court Imperial,—a man called—Marion; that was his name. Then Malin went back to Paris in time enough to congratulate the First Consul.

"Napoleon came hurrying back from Italy after the battle of Marengo, as you know, with startling haste; and for those who know the secret history of the time, it is certain that a message from Lucien was the cause of his prompt return. Lucien had an inkling of the attitude of the Mountain party; he had no idea of the quarter from which the wind blew, but he was afraid of a storm. He was incapable of suspecting the three ministers; the cause of the movement, he thought, was the hostile feeling aroused by his brother on the 18th of Brumaire, together with the firm belief that the check in Italy was irreparable, a belief largely shared at the time by the rest of the men of 1793. The cry, 'Down with the tyrant!' shouted at St. Cloud was always ringing in Lucien's ears.

"The battle of Marengo detained Napoleon in the Lombard plain till the 25th of June. On the 2d of July he arrived in France. Just try to picture the faces of the five conspirators as they congratulated the First Consul at the Tuileries on his victory! In that very room Fouché told the tribune (for Malin had a turn as a tribune) to wait a while yet, and that all was not over. As a matter of fact, it seemed to Fouché and to M. de Talleyrand that the First Consul was not quite so much wedded to the Revolution as

they themselves were; and so, for their greater safety, they buckled him thereunto by the affair of the Duc d'Enghien. You can trace the execution of that prince, by visible ramifications, back to the plot woven that night in the Hôtel of the Minister of Foreign Relations, at the time of the Marengo campaign. Certainly, at this day, it is plain to any one who has known well-informed persons, that Bonaparte was duped like a child by M. de Talleyrand and Fouché. Ambassadors from the House of Bourbon were making overtures to the First Consul at that time. Talleyrand and Fouché wanted to make a final breach between them."

"Talleyrand was playing a game of whist at Madame de Luynes'," began one of de Marsay's audience. "At three o'clock in the morning he drew out his watch and interrupted the game to ask his three companions, quite suddenly and without any preface, 'whether the Prince de Condé had any child beside the Duc d'Enghien.' So absurd a question in M. de Talleyrand's mouth caused the greatest astonishment.—'Why do you ask, when you know so well that he has none?' said they.—'To inform you that the House of Condé has come to an end at this moment.'—M. de Talleyrand had been at the Hôtel de Luynes since the evening began; he knew, no doubt, that it was impossible that Bonaparte should grant a pardon."

"But all this has nothing to do with Madame de Cinq-Cygne, that I can see," said Rastignac to de Marsay.

"Ah! you were so young, my dear fellow, that I forgot the conclusion. You know that the Comte de Gondreville was kidnapped. The affair cost the lives of the two Simeuses, and of d'Hauteserre's elder brother; d'Hauteserre married Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne, and became first the Comte and afterwards the Marquis de Cinq-Cygne——"

Several persons, however, had not heard the story; and at their request, de Marsay gave the history of the trial, saying that the five mysterious persons were tools sent down by the general police to destroy the very packages of printed matter which the Comte de Gondreville had himself come down

to burn, when he believed that the Empire was an assured fact.

"I suspect," said de Marsay, "that Fouché made search at the same time for proofs of the correspondence between Gondreville and Louis XVIII. There had been an understanding between them all along,—even during the Terror. But in this deplorable business there was an animus on the part of the principal agent. He is living yet. He is one of the great men that can fill subordinate positions; he has distinguished himself by astonishing feats. They will not find his like again. It seems that Mademoiselle de Cinq-Cygne treated him uncivilly when he went down to arrest the Simeuses. So, madame, you have the secret of the affair. You can explain it to the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne, and assist her to understand why Louis XVIII. kept silence about it."

PARIS, *January* 1841.

THE MUSE OF THE DEPARTMENT

To Monsieur le Comte Ferdinand de Gramont.

MY DEAR FERDINAND,—If the chances of the world of literature—*habent sua fata libelli*—should allow these lines to be an enduring record, that will still be but a trifle in return for the trouble you have taken—you, the Hozier, the Cherin, the King-at-Arms of these Studies of Life; you, to whom the Navarreins, Cadignans, Langeais, Blamont-Chauvrys, Chaulieus, Arthez, Esgrignons, Mortsaufs, Valois—the hundred great names that form the Aristocracy of the "Human Comedy" owe their lordly mottoes and ingenious armorial bearings. Indeed, "the Armorial of the Études, devised by Ferdinand de Gramont, gentleman," is a complete manual of French Heraldry, in which nothing is forgotten, not even the arms of the Empire, and I shall preserve it as a monument of friendship and of Benedictine patience. What profound knowledge of the old feudal spirit is to be seen in the motto of the Beauséants, *Pulchrè sedens, melius agens;* in that of the Esparda, *Des partem leonis;* in that of the Vandenesses, *Ne se vend.* And what elegance in the thousand details of the learned symbolism which will always show how far accuracy has been carried in my work, to which you, the poet, have contributed.

Your old friend,

DE BALZAC.

On the skirts of Le Berry stands a town which, watered by the Loire, infallibly attracts the traveler's eye. Sancerre crowns the topmost height of a chain of hills, the last of the range that gives variety to the Nivernais. The Loire floods the flats at the foot of these slopes, leaving a yellow alluvium that is extremely fertile, excepting in those places where it

has deluged them with sand and destroyed them forever, by one of those terrible risings which are also incidental to the Vistula—the Loire of the northern coast.

The hill on which the houses of Sancerre are grouped is so far from the river that the little river-port of Saint-Thibault thrives on the life of Sancerre. There wine is shipped and oak staves are landed, with all the produce brought from the upper and lower Loire. At the period when this story begins the suspension bridges at Cosne and at Saint-Thibault were already built. Travelers from Paris to Sancerre by the southern road were no longer ferried across the river from Cosne to Saint-Thibault; and this of itself is enough to show that the great cross-shuffle of 1830 was a thing of the past, for the House of Orleans has always had a care for substantial improvements, though somewhat after the fashion of a husband who makes his wife presents out of her marriage portion.

Excepting that part of Sancerre which occupies the little plateau, the streets are more or less steep, and the town is surrounded by slopes known as the Great Ramparts, a name which shows that they are the highroads of the place.

Outside the ramparts lies a belt of vineyards. Wine forms the chief industry and the most important trade of the country, which yields several vintages of high-class wine full of aroma, and so nearly resembling the wines of Burgundy, that the vulgar palate is deceived. So Sancerre finds in the wine-shops of Paris the quick market indispensable for liquor that will not keep for more than seven or eight years. Below the town lie a few villages, Fontenoy and Saint-Satur, almost suburbs, reminding us by their situation of the smiling vineyards about Neuchâtel in Switzerland.

The town still bears much of its ancient aspect; the streets are narrow and paved with pebbles carted up from the Loire. Some old houses are to be seen there. The citadel, a relic of military power and feudal times, stood one of the most terrible sieges of our religious wars, when French Calvinists far outdid the ferocious Cameronians of Walter Scott's tales.

The town of Sancerre, rich in its greater past, but widowed now of its military importance, is doomed to an even less glorious future, for the course of trade lies on the right bank of the Loire. The sketch here given shows that Sancerre will be left more and more lonely in spite of the two bridges connecting it with Cosne.

Sancerre, the pride of the left bank, numbers three thousand five hundred inhabitants at most, while at Cosne there are now more than six thousand. Within half a century the part played by these two towns standing opposite each other has been reversed. The advantage of situation, however, remains with the historic town, whence the view on every side is perfectly enchanting, where the air is deliciously pure, the vegetation splendid, and the residents, in harmony with nature, are friendly souls, good fellows, and devoid of Puritanism, though two-thirds of the population are Calvinists. Under such conditions, though there are the usual disadvantages of life in a small town, and each one lives under the officious eye which makes private life almost a public concern, on the other hand, the spirit of township—a sort of patriotism, which cannot indeed take the place of a love of home—flourishes triumphantly.

Thus the town of Sancerre is exceedingly proud of having given birth to one of the glories of modern medicine, Horace Bianchon, and to an author of secondary rank, Étienne Lousteau, one of our most successful journalists. The district included under the municipality of Sancerre, distressed at finding itself practically ruled by seven or eight large landowners, the wire-pullers of the elections, tried to shake off the electoral yoke of a creed which had reduced it to a rotten borough. This little conspiracy, plotted by a handful of men whose vanity was provoked, failed through the jealousy which the elevation of one of them, as the inevitable result, roused in the breasts of the others. This result showed the radical defect of the scheme, and the remedy then suggested was to rally round a champion at the next election, in the person of

one of the two men who so gloriously represented Sancerre in Paris circles.

This idea was extraordinarily advanced for the provinces, for since 1830 the nomination of parochial dignitaries has increased so greatly that real statesmen are becoming rare indeed in the lower chamber.

In point of fact, this plan, of very doubtful outcome, was hatched in the brain of the Superior Woman of the borough, *dux femina fasti,* but with a view to personal interest. This idea was so widely rooted in this lady's past life, and so entirely comprehended her future prospects, that it can scarcely be understood without some sketch of her antecedent career.

Sancerre at that time could boast of a Superior Woman, long misprized indeed, but now, about 1836, enjoying a pretty extensive local reputation. This, too, was the period at which the two Sancerrois in Paris were attaining, each in his own line, to the highest degree of glory for one, and of fashion for the other. Étienne Lousteau, a writer in reviews, signed his name to contributions to a paper that had eight thousand subscribers; and Bianchon, already chief physician to a hospital, Officer of the Legion of Honor, and member of the Academy of Sciences, had just been made a professor.

If it were not that the word would to many readers seem to imply a degree of blame, it might be said that George Sand created *Sandism,* so true is it that, morally speaking, all good has a reverse of evil. This leprosy of sentimentality has spoilt many women, who, but for her pretensions to genius, would have been charming. Still, *Sandism* has its good side, in that the woman attacked by it bases her assumption of superiority on feelings scorned; she is a blue-stocking of sentiment; and she is rather less of a bore, love to some extent neutralizing literature. The most conspicuous result of George Sand's celebrity was to elicit the fact that France has a perfectly enormous number of superior women, who have, however, till now been so generous as to leave the field to the Maréchal de Saxe's granddaughter.

The Superior Woman of Sancerre lived at La Baudraye, a town-house and country-house in one, within ten minutes of the town, and in the village, or, if you will, the suburb of Saint-Satur. The La Baudrayes of the present day have, as is frequently the case, thrust themselves in, and are but a substitute for those La Baudrayes whose name, glorious in the Crusades, figured in the chief events of the history of Le Berry.

The story must be told.

In the time of Louis XIV. a certain sheriff named Milaud, whose forefathers had been furious Calvinists, was converted at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. To encourage this movement in one of the strongholds of Calvinism, the King gave the said Milaud a good appointment in the "Waters and Forests," granted him arms and the title of Sire (or Lord) de la Baudraye, with the fief of the old and genuine La Baudrayes. The descendants of the famous Captain la Baudraye fell, sad to say, into one of the snares laid for heretics by the new decrees, and were hanged—an unworthy deed of the great King's.

Under Louis XV. Milaud de la Baudraye, from being a mere squire, was made Chevalier, and had influence enough to obtain for his son a cornet's commission in the Musketeers. This officer perished at Fontenoy, leaving a child, to whom King Louis XVI. subsequently granted the privileges, by patent, of a farmer-general, in remembrance of his father's death on the field of battle.

This financier, a fashionable wit, great at charades, capping verses, and posies to Chlora, lived in society, was a hanger-on to the Duc de Nivernais, and fancied himself obliged to follow the nobility into exile; but he took care to carry his money with him. Thus the rich *émigré* was able to assist more than one family of high rank.

In 1800, tired of hoping, and perhaps tired of lending, he returned to Sancerre, bought back La Baudraye out of a feeling of vanity and imaginary pride, quite intelligible in a sheriff's grandson, though under the consulate his prospects

were but slender; all the more so, indeed, because the ex-farmer-general had small hopes of his heir's perpetuating the new race of La Baudraye.

Jean Athanase Polydore Milaud de la Baudraye, his only son, more than delicate from his birth, was very evidently the child of a man whose constitution had early been exhausted by the excesses in which rich men indulge, who then marry at the first stage of premature old age, and thus bring degeneracy into the highest circles of society. During the years of the emigration Madame de la Baudraye, a girl of no fortune, chosen for her noble birth, had patiently reared this sallow, sickly boy, for whom she had the devoted love mothers feel for such changeling creatures. Her death—she was a Casteran de la Tour—contributed to bring about Monsieur de la Baudraye's return to France.

This Lucullus of the Milauds, when he died, left his son the fief, stripped indeed of its fines and dues, but graced with weathercocks bearing his coat-of-arms, a thousand louis-d'or —in 1802 a considerable sum of money—and certain receipts for claims on very distinguished *émigrés* enclosed in a pocket-book full of verses, with this inscription on the wrapper, *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas.*

Young La Baudraye did not die, but he owed his life to habits of monastic strictness; to the economy of action which Fontenelle preached as the religion of the invalid; and, above all, to the air of Sancerre and the influence of its fine elevation, whence a panorama over the valley of the Loire may be seen extending for forty leagues.

From 1802 to 1815 young La Baudraye added several plots to his vineyards, and devoted himself to the culture of the vine. The Restoration seemed to him at first so insecure that he dared not go to Paris to claim his debts; but after Napoleon's death he tried to turn his father's collection of autographs into money, though not understanding the deep philosophy which had thus mixed up I O U's and copies of verses. But the winegrower lost so much time in impressing his identity on the Duke of Navarreins "and others," as he

phrased it, that he came back to Sancerre, to his beloved vintage, without having obtained anything but offers of service.

The Restoration had raised the nobility to such a degree of lustre as made La Baudraye wish to justify his ambitions by having an heir. This happy result of matrimony he considered doubtful, or he would not so long have postponed the step; however, finding himself still above ground in 1823, at the age of forty-three, a length of years which no doctor, astrologer, or midwife would have dared to promise him, he hoped to earn the reward of his sober life. And yet his choice showed such a lack of prudence in regard to his frail constitution, that the malicious wit of a country town could not help thinking it must be the result of some deep calculation.

Just at this time His Eminence, Monseigneur the Archbishop of Bourges, had converted to the Catholic faith a young person, the daughter of one of the citizen families, who were the first upholders of Calvinism, and who, thanks to their obscurity or to some compromise with Heaven, had escaped from the persecutions under Louis XIV. The Piédefers—a name that was obviously one of the quaint nicknames assumed by the champions of the Reformation—had set up as highly respectable cloth merchants. But in the reign of Louis XVI., Abraham Piédefer fell into difficulties, and at his death in 1786 left his two children in extreme poverty. One of them, Tobie Piédefer, went out to the Indies, leaving the pittance they had inherited to his elder brother. During the Revolution Moïse Piédefer bought up the nationalized land, pulled down abbeys and churches with all the zeal of his ancestors, oddly enough, and married a Catholic, the only daughter of a member of the Convention who had perished on the scaffold. This ambitious Piédefer died in 1819, leaving his wife a fortune impaired by agricultural speculation, and a little girl of remarkable beauty. This child, brought up in the Calvinist faith, was named Dinah, in accordance with the custom in use among the sect, of taking their Christian names from the Bible, so as to have nothing in common with the Saints of the Roman Church.

Mademoiselle Dinah Piédefer was placed by her mother in one of the best schools in Bourges, that kept by the Demoiselles Chamarolles, and was soon as highly distinguished for the qualities of her mind as for her beauty; but she found herself snubbed by girls of birth and fortune, destined by-and-by to play a greater part in the world than a mere plebeian, the daughter of a mother who was dependent on the settlement of Piédefer's estate. Dinah, having raised herself for the moment above her companions, now aimed at remaining on a level with them for the rest of her life. She determined, therefore, to renounce Calvinism, in the hope that the Cardinal would extend his favor to his proselyte and interest himself in her prospects. You may from this judge of Mademoiselle Dinah's superiority, since at the age of seventeen she was a convert solely from ambition.

The Archbishop, possessed with the idea that Dinah Piédefer would adorn society, was anxious to see her married. But every family to whom the prelate made advances took fright at a damsel gifted with the looks of a princess, who was reputed the cleverest of Mademoiselle Chamarolles' pupils, and who, at the somewhat theatrical ceremonial of prize-giving, always took a leading part. A thousand crowns a year, which was as much as she could hope for from the estate of La Hautoy when divided between the mother and daughter, would be a mere trifle in comparison with the expenses into which a husband would be led by the personal advantages of so brilliant a creature.

As soon as all these facts came to the ears of little Polydore de la Baudraye—for they were the talk of every circle in the Department of the Cher—he went to Bourges just when Madame Piédefer, a devotee at high services, had almost made up her own mind and her daughter's to take the first comer with well-lined pockets—the first *chien coiffé,* as they say in Le Berry. And if the Cardinal was delighted to receive Monsieur de la Baudraye, Monsieur de la Baudraye was even better pleased to receive a wife from the hands of the Cardinal. The little gentleman only demanded of His Eminence

a formal promise to support his claims with the President of the Council to enable him to recover his debts from the Duc de Navarreins "and others" by a lien on their indemnities. This method, however, seemed to the able Minister then occupying the Pavillon Marsan rather too sharp practice, and he gave the vine-owner to understand that his business should be attended to all in good time.

It is easy to imagine the excitement produced in the Sancerre district by the news of Monsieur de la Baudraye's imprudent marriage.

"It is quite intelligible," said Président Boirouge; "the little man was very much startled, as I am told, at hearing that handsome young Milaud, the Attorney-General's deputy at Nevers, say to Monsieur de Clagny as they were looking at the turrets of La Baudraye, 'That will be mine some day.' —'But,' says Clagny, 'he may marry and have children.'— 'Impossible!'—So you may imagine how such a changeling as little La Baudraye must hate that colossal Milaud."

There was at Nevers a plebeian branch of the Milauds, which had grown so rich in the cutlery trade that the present representative of that branch had been brought up to the civil service, in which he had enjoyed the patronage of Marchangy, now dead.

It will be as well to eliminate from this story, in which moral developments play the principal part, the baser material interests which alone occupied Monsieur de la Baudraye, by briefly relating the results of his negotiations in Paris. This will also throw light on certain mysterious phenomena of contemporary history, and the underground difficulties in matters of politics which hampered the Ministry at the time of the Restoration.

The promises of Ministers were so illusory that Monsieur de la Baudraye determined on going to Paris at the time when the Cardinal's presence was required there by the sitting of the Chambers.

This is how the Duc de Navarreins, the principal debtor

threatened by Monsieur de la Baudraye, got out of the scrape.

The country gentleman, lodging at the Hôtel de Mayence, Rue Saint-Honoré, near the Place Vendôme, one morning received a visit from a confidential agent of the Ministry, who was an expert in "winding up" business. This elegant personage, who stepped out of an elegant cab, and was dressed in the most elegant style, was requested to walk up to No. 37 —that is to say, to the third floor, to a small room where he found his provincial concocting a cup of coffee over his bedroom fire.

"Is it to Monsieur Milaud de la Baudraye that I have the honor——"

"Yes," said the little man, draping himself in his dressing-gown.

After examining this garment, the illicit offspring of an old chiné wrapper of Madame Piédefer's and a gown of the late lamented Madame de la Baudraye, the emissary considered the man, the dressing-gown, and the little stove on which the milk was boiling in a tin saucepan, as so homogeneous and characteristic, that he deemed it needless to beat about the bush.

"I will lay a wager, monsieur," said he, audaciously, "that you dine for forty sous at Hurbain's in the Palais Royal."

"Pray, why?"

"Oh, I know you, having seen you there," replied the Parisian with perfect gravity. "All the princes' creditors dine there. You know that you recover scarcely ten per cent on debts from these fine gentlemen. I would not give you five per cent on a debt to be recovered from the estate of the late Duc d'Orléans—nor even," he added in a low voice, —"from MONSIEUR."

"So you have come to buy up the bills?" said La Baudraye, thinking himself very clever.

"Buy them!" said his visitor. "Why, what do you take me for? I am Monsieur des Lupeaulx, Master of Appeals,

Secretary-General to the Ministry, and I have come to propose an arrangement."

"What is that?"

"Of course, monsieur, you know the position of your debtor——"

"Of my debtors——"

"Well, monsieur, you understand the position of your debtors; they stand high in the King's good graces, but they have no money, and are obliged to make a good show.—Again, you know the difficulties of the political situation. The aristocracy has to be rehabilitated in the face of a very strong force of the third estate. The King's idea—and France does him scant justice—is to create a peerage as a national institution analogous to the English peerage. To realize this grand idea, we need years—and millions.—*Noblesse oblige.* The Duc de Navarreins, who is, as you know, first gentleman of the Bedchamber to the King, does not repudiate his debt; but he cannot—Now, be reasonable.—Consider the state of politics. We are emerging from the pit of Revolution.—And you yourself are noble—He simply cannot pay——"

"Monsieur——"

"You are hasty," said des Lupeaulx. "Listen. He cannot pay in money. Well, then; you, a clever man, can take payment in favors—Royal or Ministerial."

"What! When in 1793 my father put down one hundred thousand——"

"My dear sir, recrimination is useless. Listen to a simple statement in political arithmetic: The collectorship at Sancerre is vacant; a certan paymaster-general of the forces has a claim on it, but he has no chance of getting it; you have the chance—and no claim. You will get the place. You will hold it for three months, you will then resign, and Monsieur Gravier will give twenty thousand francs for it. In addition, the Order of the Legion of Honor will be conferred on you."

"Well, that is something," said the wine-grower, tempted by the money rather than by the red ribbon.

"But then," said des Lupeaulx, "you must show your gratitude to His Excellency by restoring to Monseigneur the Duc de Navarreins all your claims on him."

La Baudraye returned to Sancerre as Collector of Taxes. Six months later he was superseded by Monsieur Gravier, regarded as one of the most agreeable financiers who had served under the Empire, and who was of course presented by Monsieur de la Baudraye to his wife.

As soon as he was released from his functions, Monsieur de la Baudraye returned to Paris to come to an understanding with some other debtors. This time he was made a Referendary under the Great Seal, Baron, and Officer of the Legion of Honor. He sold the appointment as Referendary; and then the Baron de la Baudraye called on his last remaining debtors, and reappeared at Sancerre as Master of Appeals, with an appointment as Royal Commissioner to a commercial association established in the Nivernais, at a salary of six thousand francs, an absolute sinecure. So the worthy La Baudraye, who was supposed to have committed a financial blunder, had, in fact, done very good business in the choice of a wife.

Thanks to sordid economy and an indemnity paid him for the estate belonging to his father, nationalized and sold in 1793, by the year 1827 the little man could realize the dream of his whole life. By paying four hundred thousand francs down, and binding himself to further instalments, which compelled him to live for six years on the air as it came, to use his own expression, he was able to purchase the estate of Anzy on the banks of the Loire, about two leagues above Sancerre, and its magnificent castle built by Philibert de l'Orme, the admiration of every connoisseur, and for five centuries the property of the Uxelles family. At last he was one of the great landowners of the province! It is not absolutely certain that the satisfaction of knowing that an entail had been created, by letters patent dated back to December 1820, including the estates of Anzy, of La Baudraye, and of La Hautoy, was any compensation to Dinah on finding herself reduced to unconfessed penuriousness till 1835.

This sketch of the financial policy of the first Baron de la Baudraye explains the man completely. Those who are familiar with the manias of country folks will recognize in him the *land-hunger* which becomes such a consuming passion to the exclusion of every other; a sort of avarice displayed in the sight of the sun, which often leads to ruin by a want of balance between the interest on mortgages and the products of the soil. Those who, from 1802 till 1827, had merely laughed at the little man as they saw him trotting to Saint-Thibault and attending to his business, like a merchant living on his vineyards, found the answer to the riddle when the ant-lion seized his prey, after waiting for the day when the extravagance of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse culminated in the sale of that splendid property.

Madame Piédefer came to live with her daughter. The combined fortunes of Monsieur de la Baudraye and his mother-in-law, who had been content to accept an annuity of twelve hundred francs on the lands of La Hautoy which she handed over to him, amounted to an acknowledged income of about fifteen thousand francs.

During the early days of her married life, Dinah had effected some alterations which had made the house at La Baudraye a very pleasant residence. She turned a spacious forecourt into a formal garden, pulling down wine-stores, presses, and shabby outhouses. Behind the manor-house, which, though small, did not lack style with its turrets and gables, she laid out a second garden with shrubs, flower-beds, and lawns, and divided it from the vineyards by a wall hidden under creepers. She also made everything within doors as comfortable as their narrow circumstances allowed.

In order not to be ruined by a young lady so very superior as Dinah seemed to be, Monsieur de la Baudraye was shrewd enough to say nothing as to the recovery of debts in Paris. This dead secrecy as to his money matters gave a touch of mystery to his character, and lent him dignity in his wife's eyes during the first years of their married life—so majestic is silence!

The alterations effected at La Baudraye made everybody eager to see the young mistress, all the more so because Dinah would never show herself, nor receive any company, before she felt quite settled in her home and had thoroughly studied the inhabitants, and, above all, her taciturn husband. When, one spring morning in 1825, pretty Madame de la Baudraye was first seen walking on the Mall in a blue velvet dress, with her mother in black velvet, there was quite an excitement in Sancerre. This dress confirmed the young woman's reputation for superiority, brought up, as she had been, in the capital of Le Berry. Every one was afraid lest in entertaining this phœnix of the Department, the conversation should not be clever enough; and, of course, everybody was constrained in the presence of Madame de la Baudraye, who produced a sort of terror among the women-folk. As they admired a carpet of Indian shawl-pattern in the La Baudraye drawing-room, a Pompadour writing-table carved and gilt, brocade window curtains, and a Japanese bowl full of flowers on the round table among a selection of the newest books; when they heard the fair Dinah playing at sight, without making the smallest demur before seating herself at the piano, the idea they conceived of her superiority assumed vast proportions. That she might never allow herself to become careless or the victim of bad taste, Dinah had determined to keep herself up to the mark as to the fashions and latest developments of luxury by an active correspondence with Anna Grossetête, her bosom friend at Mademoiselle Chamarolles' school.

Anna, thanks to a fine fortune, had married the Comte de Fontaine's third son. Thus those ladies who visited at La Baudraye were perpetually piqued by Dinah's success in leading the fashion; do what they would, they were always behind, or, as they say on the turf, distanced.

While all these trifles gave rise to malignant envy in the ladies of Sancerre, Dinah's conversation and wit engendered absolute aversion. In her ambition to keep her mind on the level of Parisian brilliancy, Madame de la Baudraye allowed no vacuous small talk in her presence, no old-fashioned com-

pliments, no pointless remarks; she would never endure the yelping of tittle-tattle, the backstairs slander which forms the staple of talk in the country. She liked to hear of discoveries in science or art, or the latest pieces at the theatres, the newest poems, and by airing the cant words of the day she made a show of uttering thoughts.

The Abbé Duret, Curé of Sancerre, an old man of a lost type of clergy in France, a man of the world with a liking for cards, had not dared to indulge this taste in so liberal a district as Sancerre; he, therefore, was delighted at Madame de la Baudraye's coming, and they got on together to admiration. The *sous-préfet,* one Vicomte de Chargebœuf, was delighted to find in Madame de la Baudraye's drawing-room a sort of oasis where there was a truce to provincial life. As to Monsieur de Clagny, the Public Prosecutor, his admiration for the fair Dinah kept him bound to Sancerre. The enthusiastic lawyer refused all promotion, and became a quite pious adorer of this angel of grace and beauty. He was a tall, lean man, with a minatory countenance set off by terrible eyes in deep black circles, under enormous eyebrows; and his eloquence, very unlike his love-making, could be incisive.

Monsieur Gravier was a little, round man, who in the days of the Empire had been a charming ballad-singer; it was this accomplishment that had won him the high position of Paymaster-General of the forces. Having mixed himself up in certain important matters in Spain with generals at that time in opposition, he had made the most of these connections to the Minister, who, in consideration of the place he had lost, promised him the Receivership at Sancerre, and then allowed him to pay for the appointment. The frivolous spirit and light tone of the Empire had become ponderous in Monsieur Gravier; he did not, or would not, understand the wide difference between manners under the Restoration and under the Empire. Still, he conceived of himself as far superior to Monsieur de Clagny; his style was in better taste; he followed the fashion, was to be seen in a buff waistcoat, gray trousers, and neat, tightly-fitting coats; he wore a fashionable silk tie

slipped through a diamond ring, while the lawyer never dressed in anything but black—coat, trousers, and waistcoat alike, and those often shabby.

These four men were the first to go into ecstasies over Dinah's cultivation, good taste, and refinement, and pronounced her a woman of most superior mind. Then the women said to each other, "Madame de la Baudraye must laugh at us behind our back."

This view, which was more or less correct, kept them from visiting at La Baudraye. Dinah, attainted and convicted of pedantry, because she spoke grammatically, was nicknamed the Sappho of Saint-Satur. At last everybody made insolent game of the great qualities of the woman who had thus roused the enmity of the ladies of Sancerre. And they ended by denying a superiority—after all, merely comparative!—which emphasized their ignorance, and did not forgive it. Where the whole population is hunch-backed, a straight shape is the monstrosity; Dinah was regarded as monstrous and dangerous, and she found herself in a desert.

Astonished at seeing the women of the neighborhood only at long intervals, and for visits of a few minutes, Dinah asked Monsieur de Clagny the reason of this state of things.

"You are too superior a woman to be liked by other women," said the lawyer.

Monsieur Gravier, when questioned by the forlorn fair, only, after much entreaty, replied:

"Well, lady fair, you are not satisfied to be merely charming. You are clever and well educated, you know every book that comes out, you love poetry, you are a musician, and you talk delightfully. Women cannot forgive so much superiority."

Men said to Monsieur de la Baudraye:

"You who have such a Superior Woman for a wife are very fortunate——" And at last he himself would say:

"I who have a Superior Woman for a wife, am very fortunate," etc.

Madame Piédefer, flattered through her daughter, also al-

lowed herself to say such things—"My daughter, who is a very Superior Woman, was writing yesterday to Madame de Fontaine such and such a thing."

Those who know the world—France, Paris—know how true it is that many celebrities are thus created.

Two years later, by the end of the year 1825, Dinah de la Baudraye was accused of not choosing to have any visitors but men; then it was said that she did not care for women—and that was a crime. Not a thing she could do, not her most trifling action, could escape criticism and misrepresentation. After making every sacrifice that a well-bred woman can make, and placing herself entirely in the right, Madame de la Baudraye was so rash as to say to a false friend who condoled with her on her isolation:

"I would rather have my bowl empty than with anything in it!"

This speech produced a terrible effect on Sancerre, and was cruelly retorted on the Sappho of Saint-Satur when, seeing her childless after five years of married life, *little* de la Baudraye became a byword for laughter. To understand this provincial witticism, readers may be reminded of the Bailli de Ferrette—some, no doubt, having known him—of whom it was said that he was the bravest man in Europe for daring to walk on his legs, and who was accused of putting lead in his shoes to save himself from being blown away. Monsieur de la Baudraye, a sallow and almost diaphanous creature, would have been engaged by the Bailli de Ferrette as first gentleman-in-waiting if that diplomatist had been the Grand Duke of Baden instead of being merely his envoy.

Monsieur de la Baudraye, whose legs were so thin that, for mere decency, he wore false calves, whose thighs were like the arms of an average man, whose body was not unlike that of a cockchafer, would have been an advantageous foil to the Bailli de Ferrette. As he walked, the little vine-owner's leg-pads often twisted round on to his shins, so little did he make a secret of them, and he would thank any one who warned him

of this little mishap. He wore knee-breeches, black silk stockings, and a white waistcoat till 1824. After his marriage he adopted blue trousers and boots with heels, which made Sancerre declare that he had added two inches to his stature that he might come up to his wife's chin. For ten years he was always seen in the same little bottle-green coat with large white-metal buttons, and a black stock that accentuated his cold stingy face, lighted up by gray-blue eyes as keen and passionless as a cat's. Being very gentle, as men are who act on a fixed plan of conduct, he seemed to make his wife happy by never contradicting her; he allowed her to do the talking, and was satisfied to move with the deliberate tenacity of an insect.

Dinah, adored for her beauty, in which she had no rival, and admired for her cleverness by the most gentlemanly men of the place, encouraged their admiration by conversations, for which, it was subsequently asserted, she prepared herself beforehand. Finding herself listened to with rapture, she soon began to listen to herself, enjoyed haranguing her audience, and at last regarded her friends as the chorus in a tragedy, there only to give her her cues. In fact, she had a very fine collection of phrases and ideas, derived either from books or by assimilating the opinions of her companions, and thus became a sort of mechanical instrument, going off on a round of phrases as soon as some chance remark released the spring. To do her justice, Dinah was choke full of knowledge, and read everything, even medical books, statistics, science, and jurisprudence; for she did not know how to spend her days when she had reviewed her flower-beds and given her orders to the gardener. Gifted with an excellent memory, and the talent which some women have for hitting on the right word, she could talk on any subject with the lucidity of a studied style. And so men came from Cosne, from la Charité, and from Nevers, on the right bank; from Léré, Vailly, Argent, Blancafort, and Aubigny, on the left bank, to be introduced to Madame de la Baudraye, as they used in Switzerland, to be introduced to Madame de Staël. Those who only once heard

the round of tunes emitted by this musical snuff-box went away amazed, and told such wonders of Dinah as made all the women jealous for ten leagues round.

There is an indescribable mental headiness in the admiration we inspire, or in the effect of playing a part, which fends off criticism from reaching the idol. An atmosphere, produced perhaps by unceasing nervous tension, forms a sort of halo, through which the world below is seen. How otherwise can we account for the perennial good faith which leads to so many repeated presentments of the same effects, and the constant ignoring of warnings given by children, such a terror to their parents, or by husbands, so familiar as they are with the peacock airs of their wives? Monsieur de la Baudraye had the frankness of a man who opens an umbrella at the first drop of rain. When his wife was started on the subject of negro emancipation or the improvement of convict prisons, he would take up his little blue cap and vanish without a sound, in the certainty of being able to get to Saint-Thibault to see off a cargo of puncheons, and return an hour later to find the discussion approaching a close. Or, if he had no business to attend to, he would go for a walk on the Mall, whence he commanded the lovely panorama of the Loire Valley, and take a draught of fresh air while his wife was performing a sonata in words, or a dialectical duet.

Once fairly established as a Superior Woman, Dinah was eager to prove her devotion to the most remarkable creations of art. She threw herself into the propaganda of the romantic school, including, under Art, poetry and painting, literature and sculpture, furniture and the opera. Thus she became a mediævalist. She was also interested in any treasures that dated from the Renaissance, and employed her allies as so many devoted commission agents. Soon after she was married, she had become possessed of the Rougets' furniture, sold at Issoudun early in 1824. She purchased some very good things in the Nivernais and the Haute-Loire. At the New Year and on her birthday her friends never failed to give her some curiosities. These fancies found favor in the eyes of

Monsieur de la Baudraye; they gave him an appearance of sacrificing a few crowns to his wife's taste. In point of fact, his land mania allowed him to think of nothing but the estate of Anzy.

These "antiquities" at that time cost much less than modern furniture. By the end of five or six years the ante-room, the dining-room, the two drawing-rooms, and the boudoir which Dinah had arranged on the ground floor of La Baudraye, every spot even to the staircase, were crammed with masterpieces collected in the four adjacent departments. These surroundings, which were called *queer* by the neighbors, were quite in harmony with Dinah. All these marvels, so soon to be the rage, struck the imagination of the strangers introduced to her; they came expecting something unusual; and they found their expectations surpassed when, behind a bower of flowers, they saw these catacombs full of old things, piled up as Sommerard used to pile them—that "Old Mortality" of furniture. And then these finds served as so many springs which, turned on by a question, played off an essay on Jean Goujon, Michel Columb, Germain Pilon, Boulle, Van Huysum, and Boucher, the great native painter of Le Berry; on Clodion, the carver of wood, on Venetian mirrors, on Brustolone, an Italian tenor who was the Michael-Angelo of boxwood and holm oak; on the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, on the glazes of Bernard de Palissy, the enamels of Petitot, the engravings of Albrecht Dürer—whom she called Dür; on illuminations on vellum, on Gothic architecture, early decorated, flamboyant and pure—enough to turn an old man's brain and fire a young man with enthusiasm.

Madame de la Baudraye, possessed with the idea of waking up Sancerre, tried to form a so-called literary circle. The Presiding Judge, Monsieur Boirouge, who happened to have a house and garden on his hands, part of the Popinot-Chandier property, favored the notion of this *coterie*. The wily Judge talked over the rules of the society with Madame de la Baudraye; he proposed to figure as one of the founders, and to let the house for fifteen years to the literary club. By the time

it had existed a year the members were playing dominoes, billiards, and bouillotte, and drinking mulled wine, punch, and liqueurs. A few elegant little suppers were then given, and some masked balls during the Carnival. As to literature—there were the newspapers. Politics and business were discussed. Monsieur de la Baudraye was constantly there—on his wife's account, as he said jestingly.

This result deeply grieved the Superior Woman, who despaired of Sancerre, and collected the wit of the neighborhood in her own drawing-room. Nevertheless, and in spite of the efforts of Messieurs de Chargebœuf, Gravier, and de Clagny, of the Abbé Duret and the two chief magistrates, of a young doctor and a young Assistant Judge—all blind admirers of Dinah's—there were occasions when, weary of discussion, they allowed themselves an excursion into the domain of agreeable frivolity which constitutes the common basis of worldly conversation. Monsieur Gravier called this "from grave to gay." The Abbé Duret's rubber made another pleasing variety on the monologues of the oracle. The three rivals, tired of keeping their minds up to the level of the "high range of discussion"—as they called their conversation—but not daring to confess it, would sometimes turn with ingratiating hints to the old priest.

"Monsieur le Curé is dying for his game," they would say.

The wily priest lent himself very readily to the little trick. He protested.

"We should lose too much by ceasing to listen to our inspired hostess!" and so he would incite Dinah's magnanimity to take pity at last on her dear Abbé.

This bold manœuvre, a device of the Sous-préfet's, was repeated with so much skill that Dinah never suspected her slaves of escaping to the prison yard, so to speak, of the card-table; and they would leave her one of the younger functionaries to harry.

One young landowner, and the dandy of Sancerre, fell away from Dinah's good graces in consequence of some rash demonstrations. After soliciting the honor of admission to this

little circle, where he flattered himself he could snatch the blossom from the constituted authorities who guarded it, he was so unfortunate as to yawn in the middle of an explanation Dinah was favoring him with—for the fourth time, it is true —of the philosophy of Kant. Monsieur de la Thaumassière, the grandson of the historian of Le Berry, was thenceforth regarded as a man entirely bereft of soul and brains.

The three devotees *en titre* each submitted to these exorbitant demands on their mind and attention, in hope of a crowning triumph, when at last Dinah should become human; for neither of them was so bold as to imagine that Dinah would give up her innocence as a wife till she should have lost all her illusions. In 1826, when she was surrounded by adorers, Dinah completed her twentieth year, and the Abbé Duret kept her in a sort of perfervid Catholicism; so her worshipers had to be content to overwhelm her with little attentions and small services, only too happy to be taken for the carpet-knights of this sovereign lady, by strangers admitted to spend an evening or two at La Baudraye.

"Madame de la Baudraye is a fruit that must be left to ripen." This was the opinion of Monsieur Gravier, who was waiting.

As to the lawyer, he wrote letters four pages long, to which Dinah replied in soothing speech as she walked, leaning on his arm, round and round the lawn after dinner.

Madame de la Baudraye, thus guarded by three passions, and always under the eye of her pious mother, escaped the malignity of slander. It was so evident to all Sancerre that no two of these three men would ever leave the third alone with Madame de la Baudraye, that their jealousy was a comedy to the lookers-on.

To reach Saint-Thibault from Cæsar's Gate there is a way much shorter than that by the ramparts, down what is known in mountainous districts as a *coursière,* called at Sancerre *le Casse-cou,* or Break-neck Alley. The name is significant as applied to a path down the steepest part of the hillside, thickly strewn with stones, and shut in by the high banks of the vine-

yards on each side. By way of the Break-neck the distance from Sancerre to La Baudraye is much abridged. The ladies of the place, jealous of the Sappho of Saint-Satur, were wont to walk on the Mall, looking down this Longchamp of the bigwigs, whom they would stop and engage in conversation—sometimes the Sous-préfet and sometimes the Public Prosecutor—and who would listen with every sign of impatience or uncivil absence of mind. As the turrets of La Baudraye are visible from the Mall, many a younger man came to contemplate the abode of Dinah while envying the ten or twelve privileged persons who might spend their afternoons with the Queen of the neighborhood.

Monsieur de la Baudraye was not slow to discover the advantage he, as Dinah's husband, held over his wife's adorers, and he made use of them without any disguise, obtaining a remission of taxes, and gaining two lawsuits. In every litigation he used the Public Prosecutor's name with such good effect that the matter was carried no further, and, like all undersized men, he was contentious and litigious in business, though in the gentlest manner.

At the same time, the more certainly guiltless she was, the less conceivable did Madame de la Baudraye's position seem to the prying eyes of these women. Frequently, at the house of the Présidente de Boirouge, the ladies of a certain age would spend a whole evening discussing the La Baudraye household, among themselves of course. They all had suspicions of a mystery, a secret such as always interests women who have had some experience of life. And, in fact, at La Baudraye one of those slow and monotonous conjugal tragedies was being played out which would have remained for ever unknown if the merciless scalpel of the nineteenth century, guided by the insistent demand for novelty, had not dissected the darkest corners of the heart, or at any rate those which the decency of past centuries left unopened. And that domestic drama sufficiently accounts for Dinah's immaculate virtue during her early married life.

A young lady, whose triumphs at school had been the outcome of her pride, and whose first scheme in life had been rewarded by a victory, was not likely to pause in such a brilliant career. Frail as Monsieur de la Baudraye might seem, he was really an unhoped-for good match for Mademoiselle Dinah Piédefer. But what was the hidden motive of this country landowner when, at forty-four, he married a girl of seventeen; and what could his wife make out of the bargain? This was the text of Dinah's first meditations.

The little man never behaved quite as his wife expected. To begin with, he allowed her to take the five precious acres now wasted in pleasure grounds round La Baudraye, and paid, almost with generosity, the seven or eight thousand francs required by Dinah for improvements in the house, enabling her to buy the furniture at the Rougets' sale at Issoudun, and to redecorate her rooms in various styles—Mediæval, Louis XIV., and Pompadour. The young wife found it difficult to believe that Monsieur de la Baudraye was so miserly as he was reputed, or else she must have great influence with him. This illusion lasted a year and a half.

After Monsieur de la Baudraye's second journey to Paris, Dinah discovered in him the Arctic coldness of a provincial miser whenever money was in question. The first time she asked for supplies she played the sweetest of the comedies of which Eve invented the secret; but the little man put it plainly to his wife that he gave her two hundred francs a month for her personal expenses, and paid Madame Piédefer twelve hundred francs a year as a charge on the lands of La Hautoy, and that this was two hundred francs a year more than was agreed to under the marriage settlement.

"I say nothing of the cost of housekeeping," he said in conclusion. "You may give your friends cake and tea in the evening, for you must have some amusement. But I, who spent but fifteen hundred francs a year as a bachelor, now spend six thousand, including rates and repairs, and this is rather too much in relation to the nature of our property. A wine-grower is never sure of what his expenses may be—the mak-

ing, the duty, the casks—while the returns depend on a scorching day or a sudden frost. Small owners, like us, whose income is far from being fixed, must base their estimates on their minimum, for they have no means of making up a deficit or a loss. What would become of us if a wine merchant became bankrupt? In my opinion, promissory notes are so many cabbage-leaves. To live as we are living, we ought always to have a year's income in hand and count on no more than two-thirds of our returns."

Any form of resistance is enough to make a woman vow to subdue it; Dinah flung herself against a will of iron padded round with gentleness. She tried to fill the little man's soul with jealousy and alarms, but it was stockaded with insolent confidence. He left Dinah, when he went to Paris, with all the conviction of Médor in Angélique's fidelity. When she affected cold disdain, to nettle this changeling by the scorn a courtesan sometimes shows to her "protector," and which acts on him with the certainty of the screw of a winepress, Monsieur de la Baudraye gazed at his wife with fixed eyes, like those of a cat which, in the midst of domestic broils, waits till a blow is threatened before stirring from its place. The strange, speechless uneasiness that was perceptible under his mute indifference almost terrified the young wife of twenty; she could not at first understand the selfish quiescence of this man, who might be compared to a cracked pot, and who, in order to live, regulated his existence with the unchangeable regularity which a clockmaker requires of a clock. So the little man always evaded his wife, while she always hit out, as it were, ten feet above his head.

Dinah's fits of fury when she saw herself condemned never to escape from La Baudraye and Sancerre are more easily imagined than described—she who had dreamed of handling a fortune and managing the dwarf whom she, the giant, had at first humored in order to command. In the hope of some day making her appearance on the greater stage of Paris, she accepted the vulgar incense of her attendant knights with a view to seeing Monsieur de la Baudraye's name drawn from

the electoral urn; for she supposed him to be ambitious, after seeing him return thrice from Paris, each time a step higher on the social ladder. But when she struck on the man's heart, it was as though she had tapped on marble! The man who had been Receiver-General and Referendary, who was now Master of Appeals, Officer of the Legion of Honor, and Royal Commissioner, was but a mole throwing up its little hills round and round a vineyard! Then some lamentations were poured into the heart of the Public Prosecutor, of the Sous-préfet, even of Monsieur Gravier, and they all increased in their devotion to this sublime victim; for, like all women, she never mentioned her speculative schemes, and—again like all women—finding such speculation vain, she ceased to speculate.

Dinah, tossed by mental storms, was still undecided when, in the autumn of 1827, the news was told of the purchase by the Baron de la Baudraye of the estate of Anzy. Then the little old man showed an impulsion of pride and glee which for a few months changed the current of his wife's ideas; she fancied there was a hidden vein of greatness in the man when she found him applying for a patent of entail. In his triumph the Baron exclaimed:

"Dinah, you shall be a countess yet!"

There was then a patched-up reunion between the husband and wife, such as can never endure, and which only humiliated and fatigued a woman whose apparent superiority was unreal, while her unseen superiority was genuine. This whimsical medley is commoner than people think. Dinah, who was ridiculous from the perversity of her cleverness, had really great qualities of soul, but circumstances did not bring these rarer powers to light, while a provincial life debased the small change of her wit from day to day. Monsieur de la Baudraye, on the contrary, devoid of soul, of strength, and of wit, was fated to figure as a man of character, simply by pursuing a plan of conduct which he was too feeble to change.

There was in their lives a first phase, lasting six years, dur-

ing which Dinah, alas! became utterly provincial. In Paris there are several kinds of women: the duchess and the financier's wife, the ambassadress and the consul's wife, the wife of the minister who is a minister, and of him who is no longer a minister; then there is the lady—quite the lady—of the right bank of the Seine and of the left. But in the country there is but one kind of woman, and she, poor thing, is the provincial woman.

This remark points to one of the sores of modern society. It must be clearly understood: France in the nineteenth century is divided into two broad zones—Paris, and the provinces. The provinces jealous of Paris; Paris never thinking of the provinces but to demand money. Of old, Paris was the Capital of the provinces, and the Court ruled the Capital; now, all Paris is the Court, and all the country is the town.

However lofty, beautiful, and clever a girl born in any department of France may be on entering life, if, like Dinah Piédefer, she marries in the country and remains there, she inevitably becomes the provincial woman. In spite of every determination, the commonplace of second-rate ideas, indifference to dress, the culture of vulgar people, swamp the sublimer essence hidden in the youthful plant; all is over, it falls into decay. How should it be otherwise? From their earliest years girls bred in the country see none but provincials; they cannot imagine anything superior, their choice lies among mediocrities; provincial fathers marry their daughters to provincial sons; crossing the races is never thought of, and the brain inevitably degenerates, so that in many country towns intellect is as rare as the breed is hideous. Mankind becomes dwarfed in mind and body, for the fatal principle of conformity of fortune governs every matrimonial alliance. Men of talent, artists, superior brains—every bird of brilliant plumage flies to Paris. The provincial woman, inferior in herself, is also inferior through her husband. How is she to live happy under this crushing twofold consciousness?

But there is a third and terrible element besides her congenital and conjugal inferiority which contributes to make

the figure arid and gloomy; to reduce it, narrow it, distort it fatally. Is not one of the most flattering unctions a woman can lay to her soul the assurance of being something in the existence of a superior man, chosen by herself, wittingly, as if to have some revenge on marriage, wherein her tastes were so little consulted? But if in the country the husbands are inferior beings, the bachelors are no less so. When a provincial wife commits her "little sin," she falls in love with some so-called handsome native, some indigenous dandy, a youth who wears gloves and is supposed to ride well; but she knows at the bottom of her soul that her fancy is in pursuit of the commonplace, more or less well dressed. Dinah was preserved from this danger by the idea impressed upon her of her own superiority. Even if she had not been as carefully guarded during her early married life as she was by her mother, whose presence never weighed upon her till the day when she wanted to be rid of it, her pride, and her high sense of her own destinies, would have protected her. Flattered as she was to find herself surrounded by admirers, she saw no lover among them. No man here realized the poetical ideal which she and Anna Grossetête had been wont to sketch. When, stirred by the involuntary temptations suggested by the homage she received, she asked herself, "If I had to make a choice, who should it be?" she owned to a preference for Monsieur de Chargebœuf, a gentleman of good family, whose appearance and manners she liked, but whose cold nature, selfishness, and narrow ambition, never rising above a prefecture and a good marriage, repelled her. At a word from his family, who were alarmed lest he should be killed for an intrigue, the Vicomte had already deserted a woman he had loved in the town where he previously had been Sous-préfet.

Monsieur de Clagny, on the other hand, the only man whose mind appealed to hers, whose ambition was founded on love, and who knew what love means, Dinah thought perfectly odious. When Dinah saw herself condemned to six years' residence at Sancerre she was on the point of accepting the devotion of Monsieur le Vicomte de Chargebœuf; but he was ap-

pointed to a prefecture and left the district. To Monsieur de Clagny's great satisfaction, the new Sous-préfet was a married man whose wife made friends with Dinah. The lawyer had now no rival to fear but Monsieur Gravier. Now Monsieur Gravier was the typical man of forty of whom women make use while they laugh at him, whose hopes they intentionally and remorselessly encourage, as we are kind to a beast of burden. In six years, among all the men who were introduced to her from twenty leagues round, there was not one in whose presence Dinah was conscious of the excitement caused by personal beauty, by a belief in promised happiness, by the impact of a superior soul, or the anticipation of a love affair, even an unhappy one.

Thus none of Dinah's choicest faculties had a chance of developing; she swallowed many insults to her pride, which was constantly suffering under the husband who so calmly walked the stage as supernumerary in the drama of her life. Compelled to bury her wealth of love, she showed only the surface to the world. Now and then she would try to rouse herself, try to form some manly resolution; but she was kept in leading strings by the need for money. And so, slowly and in spite of the ambitious protests and grievous recriminations of her own mind, she underwent the provincial metamorphosis here described. Each day took with it a fragment of her spirited determination. She had laid down a rule for the care of her person, which she gradually departed from. Though at first she kept up with the fashions and the little novelties of elegant life, she was obliged to limit her purchases by the amount of her allowance. Instead of six hats, caps, or gowns, she resigned herself to one gown each season. She was so much admired in a certain bonnet that she made it do duty for two seasons. So it was in everything.

Not unfrequently her artistic sense led her to sacrifice the requirements of her person to secure some bit of Gothic furniture. By the seventh year she had come so low as to think it convenient to have her morning dresses made at home by the best needlewoman in the neighborhood; and her mother, her

husband, and her friends pronounced her charming in these inexpensive costumes which did credit to her taste. Her ideas were imitated! As she had no standard of comparison, Dinah fell into the snares that surround the provincial woman. If a Parisian woman's hips are too narrow or too full, her inventive wit and the desire to please help to find some heroic remedy; if she has some defect, some ugly spot, or small disfigurement, she is capable of making it an adornment; this is often seen; but the provincial woman—never! If her waist is too short, and her figure ill balanced, well, she makes up her mind to the worst, and her adorers—or they do not adore her—must take her as she is, while the Parisian always insists on being taken for what she is not. Hence the preposterous bustles, the audacious flatness, the ridiculous fulness, the hideous outlines ingeniously displayed, to which a whole town will become accustomed, but which are so astounding when a provincial woman makes her appearance in Paris or among Parisians. Dinah, who was extremely slim, showed it off to excess, and never knew the moment when it became ridiculous; when, reduced by the dull weariness of her life, she looked like a skeleton in clothes; and her friends, seeing her every day, did not observe the gradual change in her appearance.

This is one of the natural results of a provincial life. In spite of marriage, a young woman preserves her beauty for some time, and the town is proud of her; but everybody sees her every day, and when people meet every day their perception is dulled. If, like Madame de la Baudraye, she loses her color, it is scarcely noticed; or, again, if she flushes a little, that is intelligible and interesting. A little neglect is thought charming, and her face is so carefully studied, so well known, that slight changes are scarcely noticed, and regarded at last as "beauty spots." When Dinah ceased to have a new dress with a new season, she seemed to have made a concession to the philosophy of the place.

It is the same with matters of speech, choice of words and ideas, as it is with matters of feeling. The mind can rust as

well as the body if it is not rubbed up in Paris; but the thing on which provincialism most sets its stamp is gesture, gait, and movement; these soon lose the briskness which Paris constantly keeps alive. The provincial is used to walk and move in a world devoid of accident or change, there is nothing to be avoided; so in Paris she walks on as raw recruits do, never remembering that there may be hindrances, for there are none in her way in her native place, where she is known, where she is always in her place, and every one makes way for her. Thus she loses all the charm of the unforeseen.

And have you ever noticed the effect on human beings of a life in common? By the ineffaceable instinct of simian mimicry they all tend to copy each other. Each one, without knowing it, acquires the gestures, the tone of voice, the manner, the attitudes, the very countenance of others. In six years Dinah had sunk to the pitch of the society she lived in. As she acquired Monsieur de Clagny's ideas she assumed his tone of voice; she unconsciously fell into masculine manners from seeing none but men; she fancied that by laughing at what was ridiculous in them she was safe from catching it; but, as often happens, some hue of what she laughed at remained in grain.

A Parisian woman sees so many examples of good taste that a contrary result ensues. In Paris women learn to seize the hour and moment when they may appear to advantage; while Madame de la Baudraye, accustomed to take the stage, acquired an indefinable theatrical and domineering manner, the air of a *prima donna* coming forward on the boards, of which ironical smiles would soon have cured her in the capital.

But after she had acquired this stock of absurdities, and, deceived by her worshipers, imagined them to be added graces, a moment of terrible awakening came upon her like the fall of an avalanche from a mountain. In one day she was crushed by a frightful comparison.

In 1827, after the departure of Monsieur de Chargebœuf, she was excited by the anticipation of a little pleasure; she was expecting the Baronne de Fontaine. Anna's husband,

who was now Director-General under the Minister of Finance, took advantage of leave of absence on the occasion of his father's death to take his wife to Italy. Anna wished to spend a day at Sancerre with her school-friend. This meeting was strangely disastrous. Anna, who at school had been far less handsome than Dinah, now, as Baronne de Fontaine, was a thousand times handsomer than the Baronne de la Baudraye, in spite of her fatigue and her traveling dress. Anna stepped out of an elegant traveling chaise loaded with Paris milliners' boxes, and she had with her a lady's maid, whose airs quite frightened Dinah. All the difference between a woman of Paris and a provincial was at once evident to Dinah's intelligent eye; she saw herself as her friend saw her—and Anna found her altered beyond recognition. Anna spent six thousand francs a year on herself alone, as much as kept the whole household at La Baudraye.

In twenty-four hours the friends had exchanged many confidences; and the Parisian, seeing herself so far superior to the phœnix of Mademoiselle Chamarolles' school, showed her provincial friend such kindness, such attentions, while giving her certain explanations, as were so many stabs to Dinah, though she perfectly understood that Anna's advantages all lay on the surface, while her own were for ever buried.

When Anna had left, Madame de la Baudraye, by this time two-and-twenty, fell into the depths of despair.

"What is it that ails you?" asked Monsieur de Clagny, seeing her so dejected.

"Anna," said she, "has learned to live, while I have been learning to endure."

A tragi-comedy was, in fact, being enacted in Madame de la Baudraye's house, in harmony with her struggles over money matters and her successive transformations—a drama to which no one but Monsieur de Clagny and the Abbé Duret ever knew the clue, when Dinah in sheer idleness, or perhaps sheer vanity, revealed the secret of her anonymous fame.

Though a mixture of verse and prose is a monstrous anomaly in French literature, there must be exceptions to the

rule. This tale will be one of the two instances in these Studies of violation of the laws of narrative; for to give a just idea of the unconfessed struggle which may excuse, though it cannot absolve Dinah, it is necessary to give an analysis of a poem which was the outcome of her deep despair.

Her patience and her resignation alike broken by the departure of the Vicomte de Chargebœuf, Dinah took the worthy Abbé's advice to exhale her evil thoughts in verse—a proceeding which perhaps accounts for some poets.

"You will find such relief as those who write epitaphs or elegies over those whom they have lost. Pain is soothed in the heart as lines surge up in the brain."

This strange production caused a great ferment in the departments of the Allier, the Nièvre, and the Cher, proud to possess a poet capable of rivalry with the glories of Paris. *Paquita la Sevillane,* by *Jan Diaz,* was published in the *Écho du Morvan,* a review which for eighteen months maintained its existence in spite of provincial indifference. Some knowing persons at Nevers declared that Jan Diaz was making fun of the new school, just then bringing out its eccentric verse, full of vitality and imagery, and of brilliant effects produced by defying the Muse under pretext of adapting German, English, and Romanesque mannerisms.

The poem began with this ballad:

Ah! if you knew the fragrant plain,
The air, the sky, of golden Spain,
Its fervid noons, its balmy spring,
Sad daughters of the northern gloom,
Of love, of heav'n, of native home,
You never would presume to sing!

For men are there of other mould
Than those who live in this dull cold.
And there to music low and sweet
Sevillian maids, from eve till dawn,
Dance lightly on the moonlit lawn
In satin shoes, on dainty feet.

Ah, you would be the first to blush
Over your dancers' romp and rush,
And your too hideous carnival,
That turns your cheeks all chill and blue,
And skips the mud in hob-nail'd shoe—
A truly dismal festival.

To pale-faced girls, and in a squalid room,
Paquita sang; the murky town beneath
Was Rouen, whence the slender spires rise
To chew the storm with teeth.
Rouen so hideous, noisy, full of rage—

And here followed a magnificent description of Rouen—where Dinah had never been—written with the affected brutality which, a little later, inspired so many imitations of Juvenal; a contrast drawn between the life of a manufacturing town and the careless life of Spain, between the love of Heaven and of human beauty, and the worship of machinery, in short, between poetry and sordid money-making.

Then Jan Diaz accounted for Paquita's horror of Normandy by saying:

Seville, you see, had been her native home,
Seville, where skies are blue and evening sweet.
She, at thirteen, the sovereign of the town,
Had lovers at her feet.

For her three Toreadors had gone to death
Or victory; the prize to be a kiss—
One kiss from those red lips of sweetest breath—
A longed-for touch of bliss!

The features of the Spanish girl's portrait have served so often as those of the courtesan in so many self-styled *poems*, that it would be tiresome to quote here the hundred lines of description. To judge of the lengths to which audacity had carried Dinah, it will be enough to give the conclusion. According to Madame de la Baudraye's ardent pen, Paquita was

so entirely created for love that she can hardly have met with a knight worthy of her; for

> . . . . In her passionate fire
> Every man would have swooned from the heat,
> When she at love's feast, in her fervid desire,
> As yet had but taken her seat.

"And yet she could quit the joys of Seville, its woods and fields of orange-trees, for a Norman soldier who won her love and carried her away to his hearth and home. She did not weep for her Andalusia, the Soldier was her whole joy. . . . But the day came when he was compelled to start for Russia in the footsteps of the great Emperor."

Nothing could be more dainty than the description of the parting between the Spanish girl and the Normandy Captain of Artillery, who, in the delirium of passion expressed with feeling worthy of Byron, exacted from Paquita a vow of absolute fidelity, in the Cathedral at Rouen in front of the altar of the Blessed Virgin, who

> Though a Maid is a woman, and never forgives
> When lovers are false to their vows.

A large part of the poem was devoted to describing Paquita's sufferings when alone in Rouen waiting till the campaign was over; she stood writhing at the window bars as she watched happy couples go by; she suppressed her passion in her heart with a determination that consumed her; she lived on narcotics, and exhausted herself in dreams.

> Almost she died, but still her heart was true;
> And when at last her soldier came again,
> He found her beauty ever fresh and new—
> He had not loved in vain!

"But he, pale and frozen by the cold of Russia, chilled to the very marrow, met his yearning fair one with a melancholy smile."

The whole poem was written up to this situation, which was worked out with such vigor and boldness as too entirely justified the Abbé Duret.

Paquita, on reaching the limits set to real love, did not, like Julie and Héloïse, throw herself into the ideal; no, she rushed into the paths of vice, which is, no doubt, shockingly natural; but she did it without any touch of magnificence, for lack of means, as it would be difficult to find in Rouen men impassioned enough to place Paquita in a suitable setting of luxury and splendor. This horrible realism, emphasized by gloomy poetic feeling, had inspired some passages such as modern poetry is too free with, rather too like the flayed anatomical figures known to artists as *écorchés*. Then, by a highly philosophical revulsion, after describing the house of ill-fame where the Andalusian ended her days, the writer came back to the ballad at the opening:

> **Paquita now is faded, shrunk, and old,**
> **But she it was who sang:**
>
> **"If you but knew the fragrant plain,**
> **The air, the sky, of golden Spain," etc.**

The gloomy vigor of this poem, running to about six hundred lines, and serving as a powerful foil, to use a painter's word, to the two *séguidillas* at the beginning and end, the masculine utterance of inexpressible grief, alarmed the woman who found herself admired by three departments, under the black cloak of the anonymous. While she fully enjoyed the intoxicating delights of success, Dinah dreaded the malignity of provincial society, where more than one woman, if the secret should slip out, would certainly find points of resemblance between the writer and Paquita. Reflection came too late; Dinah shuddered with shame at having made "copy" of some of her woes.

"Write no more," said the Abbé Duret. "You will cease to be a woman; you will be a poet."

Moulins, Nevers, Bourges were searched to find Jan Diaz; but Dinah was impenetrable. To remove any evil impression,

in case any unforeseen chance should betray her name, she wrote a charming poem in two cantos on *The Mass-Oak,* a legend of the Nivernais:

"Once on a time the folks of Nevers and the folks of Saint-Saulge, at war with each other, came at daybreak to fight a battle, in which one or other should perish, and met in the forest of Faye. And then there stood between them, under an oak, a priest whose aspect in the morning sun was so commanding that the foes at his bidding heard Mass as he performed it under the oak, and at the words of the Gospel they made friends."—The oak is still shown in the forest of Faye.

This poem, immeasurably superior to *Paquita la Sevillane,* was far less admired.

After these two attempts Madame de la Baudraye, feeling herself a poet, had a light on her brow and a flash in her eyes that made her handsomer than ever. She cast longing looks at Paris, aspiring to fame—and fell back into her den of La Baudraye, her daily squabbles with her husband, and her little circle, where everybody's character, intentions, and remarks were too well known not to have become a bore. Though she found relief from her dreary life in literary work, and poetry echoed loudly in her empty life, though she thus found an outlet for her energies, literature increased her hatred of the gray and ponderous provincial atmosphere.

When, after the Revolution of 1830, the glory of George Sand was reflected on Le Berry, many a town envied La Châtre the privilege of having given birth to this rival of Madame de Staël and Camille Maupin, and were ready to do homage to minor feminine talent. Thus there arose in France a vast number of tenth Muses, young girls or young wives tempted from a silent life by the bait of glory. Very strange doctrines were proclaimed as to the part women should play in society. Though the sound common sense which lies at the root of the French nature was not perverted, women were suffered to express ideas and profess opinions which they would not have owned to a few years previously.

Monsieur de Clagny took advantage of this outbreak of freedom to collect the works of Jan Diaz in a small volume printed by Desroziers at Moulins. He wrote a little notice of the author, too early snatched from the world of letters, which was amusing to those who were in the secret, but which even then had not the merit of novelty. Such practical jokes, capital so long as the author remains unknown, fall rather flat if subsequently the poet stands confessed.

From this point of view, however, the memoir of Jan Diaz, born at Bourges in 1807, the son of a Spanish prisoner, may very likely some day deceive the compiler of some *Universal Biography*. Nothing is overlooked; neither the names of the professors at the Bourges College, nor those of his deceased schoolfellows, such as Lousteau, Bianchon, and other famous natives of the province, who, it is said, knew the dreamy, melancholy boy, and his precocious bent towards poetry. An elegy called *Tristesse* (Melancholy), written at school; the two poems *Paquita la Sevillane* and *Le Chêne de la Messe;* three sonnets, a description of the Cathedral and the House of Jacques Cœur at Bourges, with a tale called *Carola,* published as the work he was engaged on at the time of his death, constituted the whole of these literary remains; and the poet's last hours, full of misery and despair, could not fail to wring the hearts of the feeling public of the Nièvre, the Bourbonnais, the Cher, and the Morvan, where he died near Château-Chinon, unknown to all, even to the woman he had loved!

Of this little yellow paper volume two hundred copies were printed; one hundred and fifty were sold—about fifty in each department. This average of tender and poetic souls in three departments of France is enough to revive the enthusiasm of writers as to the *Furia Francese,* which nowadays is more apt to expend itself in business than in books.

When Monsieur de Clagny had given away a certain number of copies, Dinah still had seven or eight, wrapped up in the newspapers which had published notices of the work. Twenty copies forwarded to the Paris papers were swamped in the editors' offices. Nathan was taken in as well as several of his

fellow-countrymen of Le Berry, and wrote an article on the great man, in which he credited him with all the fine qualities we discover in those who are dead and buried.

Lousteau, warned by his fellow-schoolfellows, who could not remember Jan Diaz, waited for information from Sancerre, and learned that Jan Diaz was a pseudonym assumed by a woman.

Then, in and around Sancerre, Madame de la Baudraye became the rage; she was the future rival of George Sand From Sancerre to Bourges a poem was praised which, at any other time, would certainly have been hooted. The provincial public—like every French public, perhaps—does not share the love of the King of the French for the happy medium: it lifts you to the skies or drags you in the mud.

By this time the good Abbé, Madame de la Baudraye's counselor, was dead; he would certainly have prevented her rushing into public life. But three years of work without recognition weighed on Dinah's soul, and she accepted the clatter of fame as a substitute for her disappointed ambitions. Poetry and dreams of celebrity, which had lulled her grief since her meeting with Anna Grossetête, no longer sufficed to exhaust the activity of her morbid heart. The Abbé Duret, who had talked of the world when the voice of religion was impotent, who understood Dinah, and promised her a happy future by assuring her that God would compensate her for sufferings bravely endured,—this good old man could no longer stand between the opening to sin and the handsome young woman he had called his daughter.

The wise old priest had more than once endeavored to enlighten Dinah as to her husband's character, telling her that the man could hate; but women are not ready to believe in such force in weak natures, and hatred is too constantly in action not to be a vital force. Dinah, finding her husband incapable of love, denied him the power to hate.

"Do not confound hatred and vengeance," said the Abbé. "They are two different sentiments. One is the instinct of small minds; the other is the outcome of law which great

souls obey. God is avenged, but He does not hate. Hatred is a vice of narrow souls; they feed it with all their meanness, and make it a pretext for sordid tyranny. So beware of offending Monsieur de la Baudraye; he would forgive an infidelity, because he could make capital of it, but he would be doubly implacable if you should touch him on the spot so cruelly wounded by Monsieur Milaud of Nevers, and would make your life unendurable."

Now, at the time when the whole countryside—Nevers and Sancerre, Le Morvan and Le Berry—was priding itself on Madame de la Baudraye, and lauding her under the name of Jan Diaz, "little La Baudraye" felt her glory a mortal blow. He alone knew the secret source of *Paquita la Sevillane*. When this terrible work was spoken of, everybody said of Dinah—"Poor woman! Poor soul!"

The women rejoiced in being able to pity her who had so long oppressed them; never had Dinah seemed to stand higher in the eyes of the neighborhood.

The shriveled old man, more wrinkled, yellower, feebler than ever, gave no sign; but Dinah sometimes detected in his eyes, as he looked at her, a sort of icy venom which gave the lie to his increased politeness and gentleness. She understood at last that this was not, as she had supposed, a mere domestic squabble; but when she forced an explanation with her "insect," as Monsieur Gravier called him, she found the cold, hard impassibility of steel. She flew into a passion; she reproached him for her life these eleven years past; she made —intentionally—what women call a scene. But "little La Baudraye" sat in an armchair with his eyes shut, and listened phlegmatically to the storm. And, as usual, the dwarf got the better of his wife. Dinah saw that she had done wrong in writing; she vowed never to write another line, and she kept her vow.

Then was there desolation in the Sancerrois.

"Why did not Madame de la Baudraye compose any more verses?" was the universal cry.

At this time Madame de la Baudraye had no enemies; every

one rushed to see her, not a week passed without fresh introductions. The wife of the presiding judge, an august *bourgeoise, née* Popinot-Chandier, desired her son, a youth of two-and-twenty, to pay his humble respects at La Baudraye, and flattered herself that she might see her Gatien in the good graces of this Superior Woman.—The words Superior Woman had superseded the absurd nickname of *The Sappho of Saint Satur.*—This lady, who for nine years had led the opposition, was so delighted at the good reception accorded to her son, that she became loud in her praises of the Muse of Sancerre.

"After all," she exclaimed, in reply to a tirade from Madame de Clagny, who hated her husband's supposed mistress, "she is the handsomest and cleverest woman in the whole province!"

After scrambling through so many brambles and setting off on so many different roads, after dreaming of love in splendor and scenting the darkest dramas, thinking such terrible joys would be cheaply purchased so weary was she of her dreary existence, one day Dinah fell into the pit she had sworn to avoid. Seeing Monsieur de Clagny always sacrificing himself, and at last refusing a high appointment in Paris, where his family wanted to see him, she said to herself, "He loves me!" She vanquished her repulsion, and seemed willing to reward so much constancy.

It was to this impulse of generosity on her part that a coalition was due, formed in Sancerre to secure the return of Monsieur de Clagny at the next elections. Madame de la Baudraye had dreamed of going to Paris in the wake of the new deputy.

But, in spite of the most solemn promises, the hundred and fifty votes to be recorded in favor of this adorer of the lovely Dinah—who hoped to see this defender of the widow and the orphan wearing the gown of the Keeper of the Seals—figured as an imposing minority of fifty votes. The jealousy of the Président de Boirouge, and Monsieur Gravier's hatred, for he believed in the candidate's supremacy in Dinah's heart, had been worked upon by a young Sous-préfet; and for this

worthy deed the allies got the young man made a préfet elsewhere.

"I shall never cease to regret," said he, as he quitted Sancerre, "that I did not succeed in pleasing Madame de la Baudraye; that would have made my triumph complete!"

The household that was thus racked by domestic troubles was calm on the surface; here were two ill-assorted but resigned beings, and the indescribable propriety, the lie that society insists on, and which to Dinah was an unendurable yoke. Why did she long to throw off the mask she had worn for twelve years? Whence this weariness which, every day, increased her hope of finding herself a widow?

The reader who has noted all the phases of her existence will have understood the various illusions by which Dinah, like many another woman, had been deceived. After an attempt to master Monsieur de la Baudraye, she had indulged the hope of becoming a mother. Between those miserable disputes over household matters and the melancholy conviction as to her fate, quite a long time had elapsed. Then, when she had looked for consolation, the consoler, Monsieur de Chargebœuf, had left her. Thus, the overwhelming temptation which commonly causes women to sin had hitherto been absent. For if there are, after all, some women who make straight for unfaithfulness, are there not many more who cling to hope, and do not fall till they have wandered long in a labyrinth of secret woes?

Such was Dinah. She had so little impulse to fail in her duty, that she did not care enough for Monsieur de Clagny to forgive him his defeat.

Then the move to the Château d'Anzy, the rearrangement of her collected treasures and curiosities, which derived added value from the splendid setting which Philibert de Lorme seemed to have planned on purpose for this museum, occupied her for several months, giving her leisure to meditate one of those decisive steps that startle the public, ignorant of the motives which, however, it sometimes discovers by dint of gossip and suppositions.

Madame de la Baudraye had been greatly struck by the reputation of Lousteau, who was regarded as a lady's man of the first water in consequence of his intimacies among actresses; she was anxious to know him; she read his books, and was fired with enthusiasm, less perhaps for his talents than for his successes with women; and to attract him to the country, she started the notion that it was obligatory on Sancerre to return one of its great men at the elections. She made Gatien Boirouge write to the great physician Bianchon, whom he claimed as a cousin through the Popinots. Then she persuaded an old friend of the departed Madame Lousteau to stir up the journalist's ambitions by letting him know that certain persons in Sancerre were firmly bent on electing a deputy from among the distinguished men in Paris.

Tired of her commonplace neighbors, Madame de la Baudraye would thus at last meet really illustrious men, and might give her fall the lustre of fame.

Neither Lousteau nor Bianchon replied; they were waiting perhaps till the holidays. Bianchon, who had won his professor's chair the year before after a brilliant contest, could not leave his lectures.

In the month of September, when the vintage was at its height, the two Parisians arrived in their native province, and found it absorbed in the unremitting toil of the wine-crop of 1836; there could therefore be no public demonstration in their favor. "We have fallen flat," said Lousteau to his companion, in the slang of the stage.

In 1836, Lousteau, worn by sixteen years of struggle in the Capital, and aged quite as much by pleasure as by penury, hard work, and disappointments, looked eight-and-forty, though he was no more than thirty-seven. He was already bald, and had assumed a Byronic air in harmony with his early decay and the lines furrowed in his face by over-indulgence in champagne. He ascribed these signs-manual of dissipation to the severities of a literary life, declaring that the Press was murderous; and he gave it to be understood that it consumed superior talents, so as to lend a grace to his

exhaustion. In his native town he thought proper to exaggerate his affected contempt of life and his spurious misanthropy. Still, his eyes could flash with fire like a volcano supposed to be extinct, and he endeavored, by dressing fashionably, to make up for the lack of youth that might strike a woman's eye.

Horace Bianchon, who wore the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, was fat and burly, as beseems a fashionable physician, with a patriarchal air, his hair thick and long, a prominent brow, the frame of a hard worker, and the calm expression of a philosopher. This somewhat prosaic personality set off his more frivolous companion to advantage.

The two great men remained unrecognized during a whole morning at the inn where they had put up, and it was only by chance that Monsieur de Clagny heard of their arrival. Madame de la Baudraye, in despair at this, despatched Gatien Boirouge, who had no vineyards, to beg the two gentlemen to spend a few days at the Château d'Anzy. For the last year Dinah had played the châtelaine, and spent the winter only at La Baudraye. Monsieur Gravier, the Public Prosecutor, the Presiding Judge, and Gatien Boirouge combined to give a banquet to the great men, to meet the literary personages of the town.

On hearing that the beautiful Madame de la Baudraye was Jan Diaz, the Parisians went to spend three days at Anzy, fetched in a sort of wagonette driven by Gatien himself. The young man, under a genuine illusion, spoke of Madame de la Baudraye not only as the handsomest woman in those parts, a woman so superior that she might give George Sand a qualm, but as a woman who would produce a great sensation in Paris. Hence the extreme though suppressed astonishment of Doctor Bianchon and the waggish journalist when they beheld, on the garden steps of Anzy, a lady dressed in thin black cashmere with a deep tucker, in effect like a riding-habit cut short, for they quite understood the pretentiousness of such extreme simplicity. Dinah also wore a black velvet cap, like that in

the portrait of Raphael, and below it her hair fell in thick curls. This attire showed off a rather pretty figure, fine eyes, and handsome eyelids somewhat faded by the weariful life that has been described. In Le Berry the singularity of this *artistic* costume was a cloak for the romantic affectations of the Superior Woman.

On seeing the affectations of their too amiable hostess—which were, indeed, affectations of soul and mind—the friends glanced at each other, and put on a deeply serious expression to listen to Madame de la Baudraye, who made them a set speech of thanks for coming to cheer the monotony of her days. Dinah walked her guests round and round the lawn, ornamented with large vases of flowers, which lay in front of the Chateâu d'Anzy.

"How is it," said Lousteau, the practical joker, "that so handsome a woman as you, and apparently so superior, should have remained buried in the country? What do you do to make life endurable?"

"Ah! that is the crux," said the lady. "It is unendurable. Utter despair or dull resignation—there is no third alternative; that is the arid soil in which our existence is rooted, and on which a thousand stagnant ideas fall; they cannot fertilize the ground, but they supply food for the etiolated flowers of our desert souls. Never believe in indifference! Indifference is either despair or resignation. Then each woman takes up the pursuit which, according to her character, seems to promise some amusement. Some rush into jam-making and washing, household management, the rural joys of the vintage or the harvest, bottling fruit, embroidering handkerchiefs, the cares of motherhood, the intrigues of a country town. Others torment a much-enduring piano, which, at the end of seven years, sounds like an old kettle, and ends its asthmatic life at the Château d'Anzy. Some pious dames talk over the different brands of the Word of God—the Abbé Fritaud as compared with the Abbé Guinard. They play cards in the evening, dance with the same partners for twelve years running, in the same rooms, at the same dates. This delightful

life is varied by solemn walks on the Mall, visits of politeness among the women, who ask each other where they bought their gowns.

"Conversation is bounded on the south by remarks on the intrigues lying hidden under the stagnant water of provincial life, on the north by proposed marriages, on the west by jealousies, and on the east by sour remarks.

"And so," she went on, striking an attitude, "you see a woman wrinkled at nine-and-twenty, ten years before the time fixed by the rules of Doctor Bianchon, a woman whose skin is ruined at an early age, who turns as yellow as a quince when she is yellow at all—we have seen some turn green. When we have reached that point, we try to justify our normal condition; then we turn and rend the terrible passion of Paris with teeth as sharp as rat's teeth. We have Puritan women here, sour enough to tear the laces of Parisian finery, and eat out all the poetry of your Parisian beauties, who undermine the happiness of others while they cry up their walnuts and rancid bacon, glorify this squalid mouse-hole, and the dingy color and conventual smell of our delightful life at Sancerre."

"I admire such courage, madame," said Bianchon. "When we have to endure such misfortunes, it is well to have the wit to make a virtue of necessity."

Amazed at the brilliant move by which Dinah thus placed provincial life at the mercy of her guests, in anticipation of their sarcasms, Gatien Boirouge nudged Lousteau's elbow, with a glance and a smile, which said:

"Well! did I say too much?"

"But, madame," said Lousteau, "you are proving that we are still in Paris. I shall steal this gem of description; it will be worth ten francs to me in an article."

"Oh, monsieur," she retorted, "never trust provincial women."

"And why not?" said Lousteau.

Madame de la Baudraye was wily enough—an innocent form of cunning, to be sure—to show the two Parisians, one

of whom she would choose to be her conquerer, the snare into which he would fall, reflecting that she would have the upper hand at the moment when he should cease to see it.

"When you first come," said she, "you laugh at us. Then when you have forgotten the impression of Paris brilliancy, and see us in our own sphere, you pay court to us, if only as a pastime. And you, who are famous for your past passions, will be the object of attentions which will flatter you. Then take care!" cried Dinah, with a coquettish gesture, raising herself above provincial absurdities and Lousteau's irony by her own sarcastic speech. "When a poor little country-bred woman has an eccentric passion for some superior man, some Parisian who has wandered into the provinces, it is to her something more than a sentiment; she makes it her occupation and part of all her life. There is nothing more dangerous than the attachment of such a woman; she compares, she studies, she reflects, she dreams; and she will not give up her dream, she thinks still of the man she loves when he has ceased to think of her.

"Now one of the catastrophes that weigh most heavily on a woman in the provinces is that abrupt termination of her passion which is so often seen in England. In the country, a life under minute observation as keen as an Indian's compels a woman either to keep on the rails or to start aside like a steam engine wrecked by an obstacle. The strategies of love, the coquetting which form half the composition of a Parisian woman, are utterly unknown here."

"That is true," said Lousteau. "There is in a country-bred woman's heart a store of surprises, as in some toys."

"Dear me!" Dinah went on, "a woman will have spoken to you three times in the course of a winter, and without your knowing it, you will be lodged in her heart. Then comes a picnic, an excursion, what not, and all is said—or, if you prefer it, all is done! This conduct, which seems odd to unobserving persons, is really very natural. A poet, such as you are, or a philosopher, an observer, like Doctor Bianchon, instead of vilifying the provincial woman and believing her de-

praved, would be able to guess the wonderful unrevealed poetry, every chapter, in short, of the sweet romance of which the last phase falls to the benefit of some happy sub-lieutenant or some provincial bigwig."

"The provincial women I have met in Paris," said Lousteau, "were, in fact, rapid in their proceedings——"

"My word, they are strange," said the lady, giving a significant shrug of her shoulders.

"They are like the playgoers who book for the second performance, feeling sure that the piece will not fail," replied the journalist.

"And what is the cause of all these woes?" asked Bianchon.

"Paris is the monster that brings us grief," replied the Superior Woman. "The evil is seven leagues round, and devastates the whole land. Provincial life is not self-existent. It is only when a nation is divided into fifty minor states that each can have a physiognomy of its own, and then a woman reflects the glory of the sphere where she reigns. This social phenomenon, I am told, may be seen in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany; but in France, as in every country where there is but one capital, a dead level of manners must necessarily result from centralization."

"Then you would say that manners could only recover their individuality and native distinction by the formation of a federation of French states into one empire?" said Lousteau.

"That is hardly to be wished, for France would have to conquer too many countries," said Bianchon.

"This misfortune is unknown to England," exclaimed Dinah. "London does not exert such tyranny as that by which Paris oppresses France—for which, indeed, French ingenuity will at last find a remedy; however, it has a worse disease in its vile hypocrisy, which is a far greater evil!"

"The English aristocracy," said Lousteau, hastening to put a word in, for he foresaw a Byronic paragraph, "has the advantage over ours of assimilating every form of superiority; it lives in the midst of magnificent parks; it is in London for no more than two months. It lives in the country, flourishing there, and making it flourish."

"Yes," said Madame de la Baudraye, "London is the capital of trade and speculation, and the centre of government. The aristocracy hold a 'mote' there for sixty days only; it gives and takes the passwords of the day, looks in on the legislative cookery, reviews the girls to marry, the carriages to be sold, exchanges greetings, and is away again; and is so far from amusing, that it cannot bear itself for more than the few days known as 'the season.'"

"Hence," said Lousteau, hoping to stop this nimble tongue by an epigram, "in Perfidious Albion, as the *Constitutionnel* has it, you may happen to meet a charming woman in any part of the kingdom."

"But charming *English* women!" replied Madame de la Baudraye with a smile. "Here is my mother, I will introduce you," said she, seeing Madame Piédefer coming towards them.

Having introduced the two Paris lions to the ambitious skeleton that called itself woman under the name of Madame Piédefer—a tall, lean personage with a red face, teeth that were doubtfully genuine, and hair that was undoubtedly dyed, Dinah left her visitors to themselves for a few minutes.

"Well," said Gatien to Lousteau, "what do you think of her?"

"I think that the clever woman of Sancerre is simply the greatest chatterbox," replied the journalist.

"A woman who wants to see you deputy!" cried Gatien. "An angel!"

"Forgive me, I forgot you were in love with her," said Lousteau. "Forgive the cynicism of an old scamp.—Ask Bianchon; I have no illusions left. I see things as they are. The woman has evidently dried up her mother like a partridge left to roast at too fierce a fire."

Gatien de Boirouge contrived to let Madame de la Baudraye know what the journalist had said of her in the course of the dinner, which was copious, not to say splendid, and the lady took care not to talk too much while it was proceeding. This lack of conversation betrayed Gatien's indiscretion.

Étienne tried to regain his footing, but all Dinah's advances were directed to Bianchon.

However, half-way through the evening, the Baroness was gracious to Lousteau again. Have you never observed what great meanness may be committed for small ends? Thus the haughty Dinah, who would not sacrifice herself for a fool, who in the depths of the country led such a wretched life of struggles, of suppressed rebellion, of unuttered poetry, who to get away from Lousteau had climbed the highest and steepest peak of her scorn, and who would not have come down if she had seen the sham Byron at her feet, suddenly stepped off it as she recollected her album.

Madame de la Baudraye had caught the mania for autographs; she possessed an oblong volume which deserved the name of album better than most, as two-thirds of the pages were still blank. The Baronne de Fontaine, who had kept it for three months, had with great difficulty obtained a line from Rossini, six bars written by Meyerbeer, the four lines that Victor Hugo writes in every album, a verse from Lamartine, a few words from Béranger, *Calypso ne pouvait se consoler du départ d'Ulysse* (the first words of *Télémaque*) written by George Sand, Scribe's famous lines on the Umbrella, a sentence from Charles Nodier, an outline of distance by Jules Dupré, the signature of David d'Angers, and three notes written by Hector Berlioz. Monsieur de Clagny, during a visit to Paris, added a song by Lacenaire—a much coveted autograph, two lines from Fieschi, and an extremely short note from Napoleon, which were pasted on to pages of the album. Then Monsieur Gravier, in the course of a tour, had persuaded Mademoiselle Mars to write her name on this album, with Mademoiselle Georges, Taglioni, and Grisi, and some distinguished actors, such as Frédérick Lemaître, Monrose, Bouffé, Rubini, Lablache, Nourrit, and Arnal; for he knew a set of old fellows bought up in the seraglio, as they phrased it, who did him this favor.

This beginning of a collection was all the more precious to Dinah because she was the only person for ten leagues

round who owned an album. Within the last two years, however, several young ladies had acquired such books, in which they made their friends and acquaintances write more or less absurd quotations or sentiments. You who spend your lives in collecting autographs, simple and happy souls, like Dutch tulip fanciers, you will excuse Dinah when, in her fear of not keeping her guests more than two days, she begged Bianchon to enrich the volume she handed to him with a few lines of his writing.

The doctor made Lousteau smile by showing him this sentence on the first page:

"What makes the populace dangerous is that it has in its pocket an absolution for every crime.

"J. B. DE CLAGNY."

"We will second the man who is brave enough to plead in favor of the Monarchy," Desplein's great pupil whispered to Lousteau, and he wrote below:

"The distinction between Napoleon and a water-carrier is evident only to Society; Nature takes no account of it. Thus Democracy, which resists inequality, constantly appeals to Nature. H. BIANCHON."

"Ah!" cried Dinah, amazed, "you rich men take a gold piece out of your purse as poor men bring out a farthing. . . . I do not know," she went on, turning to Lousteau, "whether it is taking an unfair advantage of a guest to hope for a few lines——"

"Nay, madame, you flatter me. Bianchon is a great man, but I am too insignificant!—Twenty years hence my name will be more difficult to identify than that of the Public Prosecutor whose axiom, written in your album, will designate him as an obscurer Montesquieu. And I should want at least twenty-four hours to improvise some sufficiently bitter reflections, for I could only describe what I feel."

"I wish you needed a fortnight," said Madame de la Baudraye graciously, as she handed him the book. "I should keep you here all the longer."

At five next morning all the party in the Château d'Anzy were astir, little La Baudraye having arranged a day's sport for the Parisians—less for their pleasure than to gratify his own conceit. He was delighted to make them walk over the twelve hundred acres of waste land that he was intending to reclaim, an undertaking that would cost some hundred thousand francs, but which might yield an increase of thirty to sixty thousand francs a year in the returns of the estate of Anzy.

"Do you know why the Public Prosecutor has not come out with us?" asked Gatien Boirouge of Monsieur Gravier.

"Why, he told us that he was obliged to sit to-day; the minor cases are before the Court," replied the other.

"And did you believe that?" cried Gatien. "Well, my papa said to me, 'Monsieur Lebas will not join you early, for Monsieur de Clagny has begged him as his deputy to sit for him!'"

"Indeed!" said Gravier, changing countenance. "And Monsieur de la Baudraye is gone to La Charité!"

"But why do you meddle in such matters?" said Bianchon to Gatien.

"Horace is right," said Lousteau. "I cannot imagine why you trouble your heads so much about each other; you waste your time in frivolities."

Horace Bianchon looked at Étienne Lousteau, as much as to say that newspaper epigrams and the satire of the "funny column" were incomprehensible at Sancerre.

On reaching a copse, Monsieur Gravier left the two great men and Gatien, under the guidance of a keeper, to make their way through a little ravine.

"Well, we must wait for Monsieur Gravier," said Bianchon, when they had reached a clearing.

"You may be a great physician," said Gatien, "but you are

ignorant of provincial life. You mean to wait for Monsieur Gravier?—By this time he is running like a hare, in spite of his little round stomach; he is within twenty minutes of Anzy by now——" Gatien looked at his watch. "Good! he will be just in time."

"Where?"

"At the château for breakfast," replied Gatien. "Do you suppose I could rest easy if Madame de la Baudraye were alone with Monsieur de Clagny? There are two of them now; they will keep an eye on each other. Dinah will be well guarded."

"Ah, ha! Then Madame de la Baudraye has not yet made up her mind?" said Lousteau.

"So mamma thinks. For my part, I am afraid that Monsieur de Clagny has at last succeeded in bewitching Madame de la Baudraye. If he has been able to show her that he had any chance of putting on the robes of the Keeper of the Seals, he may have hidden his moleskin complexion, his terrible eyes, his touzled mane, his voice like a hoarse crier's, his bony figure, like that of a starveling poet, and have assumed all the charms of Adonis. If Dinah sees Monsieur de Clagny as Attorney-General, she may see him as a handsome youth. Eloquence has great privileges.—Besides, Madame de la Baudraye is full of ambition. She does not like Sancerre, and dreams of the glories of Paris."

"But what interest have you in all this?" said Lousteau. "If she is in love with the Public Prosecutor!—Ah! you think she will not love him for long, and you hope to succeed him."

"You who live in Paris," said Gatien, "meet as many different women as there are days in the year. But at Sancerre, where there are not half a dozen, and where, of those six, five set up for the most extravagant virtue, when the handsomest of them all keeps you at an infinite distance by looks as scornful as though she were of the blood royal, a young man of two-and-twenty may surely be allowed to make a guess at her secrets, since she must then treat him with some consideration."

"Consideration! So that is what you call it in these parts?" said the journalist with a smile.

"I should suppose Madame de la Baudraye to have too much good taste to trouble her head about that ugly ape," said Bianchon.

"Horace," said Lousteau, "look here, O learned interpreter of human nature, let us lay a trap for the Public Prosecutor; we shall be doing our friend Gatien a service, and get a laugh out of it. I do not love Public Prosecutors."

"You have a keen intuition of destiny," said Horace. "But what can we do?"

"Well, after dinner we will tell sundry little anecdotes of wives caught out by their husbands, killed, murdered under the most terrible circumstances.—Then we shall see the faces that Madame de la Baudraye and de Clagny will make."

"Not amiss!" said Bianchon; "one or the other must surely, by look or gesture——"

"I know a newspaper editor," Lousteau went on, addressing Gatien, "who, anxious to forefend a grievous fate, will take no stories but such as tell the tale of lovers burned, hewn, pounded, or cut to pieces; of wives boiled, fried, or baked; he takes them to his wife to read, hoping that sheer fear will keep her faithful—satisfied with that humble alternative, poor man! 'You see, my dear, to what the smallest error may lead you!' says he, epitomizing Arnolfe's address to Agnès."

"Madame de la Baudraye is quite guiltless; this youth sees double," said Bianchon. "Madame Piédefer seems to me far too pious to invite her daughter's lover to the Château d'Anzy. Madame de la Baudraye would have to hoodwink her mother, her husband, her maid, and her mother's maid; that is too much to do. I acquit her."

"With the more reason because her husband never 'quits her,'" said Gatien, laughing at his own wit.

"We can easily remember two or three stories that will make Dinah quake," said Lousteau. "Young man—and you too, Bianchon—let me beg you to maintain a stern demeanor; be thorough diplomatists, an easy manner without exaggeration, and watch the faces of the two criminals, you know,

without seeming to do so—out of the corner of your eye, or in a glass, on the sly. This morning we will hunt the hare, this evening we will hunt the Public Prosecutor."

The evening began with a triumph for Lousteau, who returned the album to the lady with this elegy written in it:

SPLEEN

You ask for verse from me, the feeble prey
Of this self-seeking world, a waif and stray
With none to whom to cling;
From me—unhappy, purblind, hopeless devil!
Who e'en in what is good see only evil
In any earthly thing!

This page, the pastime of a dame so fair,
May not reflect the shadow of my care,
For all things have their place.
Of love, to ladies bright, the poet sings,
Of joy, and balls, and dress, and dainty things—
Nay, or of God and Grace.

It were a bitter jest to bid the pen
Of one so worn with life, so hating men,
Depict a scene of joy.
Would you exult in sight to one born blind,
Or—cruel! of a mother's love remind
Some hapless orphan boy?

When cold despair has gripped a heart still fond,
When there is no young heart that will respond
To it in love, the future is a lie.
If there is none to weep when he is sad,
And share his woe, a man were better dead!—
And so I soon must die.

Give me your pity! often I blaspheme
The sacred name of God. Does it not seem
That I was born in vain?
Why should I bless Him? Or why thank Him, since
He might have made me handsome, rich, a prince—
And I am poor and plain?

ÉTIENNE LOUSTEAU.

September 1836, Château d'Anzy.

"And you have written those verses since yesterday?" cried Clagny in a suspicious tone.

"Dear me, yes, as I was following the game; it is only too evident! I would gladly have done something better for madame."

"The verses are exquisite!" cried Dinah, casting up her eyes to heaven.

"They are, alas! the expression of a too genuine feeling," replied Lousteau, in a tone of deep dejection.

The reader will, of course, have guessed that the journalist had stored these lines in his memory for ten years at least, for he had written them at the time of the Restoration in disgust at being unable to get on. Madame de la Baudraye gazed at him with such pity as the woes of genius inspire; and Monsieur de Clagny, who caught her expression, turned in hatred against this sham *Jeune Malade.** He sat down to backgammon with the curé of Sancerre. The Presiding Judge's son was so extremely obliging as to place a lamp near the two players in such a way as that the light fell full on Madame de la Baudraye, who took up her work; she was embroidering in coarse wool a wicker-plait paper-basket. The three conspirators sat close at hand.

"For whom are you decorating that pretty basket, madame?" said Lousteau. "For some charity lottery, perhaps?"

"No," she said, "I think there is too much display in charity done to the sound of a trumpet."

"You are very indiscreet," said Monsieur Gravier.

"Can there be any indiscretion," said Lousteau, "in inquiring who the happy mortal may be in whose room that basket is to stand?"

"There is no happy mortal in the case," said Dinah; "it is for Monsieur de la Baudraye."

The Public Prosecutor looked slily at Madame de la Baudraye and her work, as if he had said to himself, "I have lost my paper-basket!"

*The name of an Elegy written by Millevoye.

"Why, madame, may we not think him happy in having a lovely wife, happy in her decorating his paper-baskets so charmingly? The colors are red and black, like Robin Goodfellow. If ever I marry, I only hope that twelve years after, my wife's embroidered baskets may still be for me."

"And why should they not be for you?" said the lady, fixing her fine gray eyes, full of invitation, on Étienne's face.

"Parisians believe in nothing," said the lawyer bitterly. "The virtue of women is doubted above all things with terrible insolence. Yes, for some time past the books you have written, you Paris authors, your farces, your dramas, all your atrocious literature, turn on adultery——"

"Come, come, Monsieur the Public Prosecutor," retorted Étienne, laughing, "I left you to play your game in peace, I did not attack you, and here you are bringing an indictment against me. On my honor as a journalist, I have launched above a hundred articles against the writers you speak of; but I confess that in attacking them it was to attempt something like criticism. Be just; if you condemn them, you must condemn Homer, whose *Iliad* turns on Helen of Troy; you must condemn Milton's *Paradise Lost.* Eve and her serpent seem to me a pretty little case of symbolical adultery; you must suppress the Psalms of David, inspired by the highly adulterous love affairs of that Louis XIV. of Judah; you must make a bonfire of *Mithridate, le Tartuffe, l'École des Femmes, Phèdre, Andromaque, le Mariage de Figaro,* Dante's *Inferno,* Petrarch's Sonnets, all the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the romances of the Middle Ages, the History of France and of Rome, etc., etc. Excepting Bossuet's *Histoire des Variations* and Pascal's *Provinciales,* I do not think there are many books left to read if you insist on eliminating all those in which illicit love is mentioned."

"Much loss that would be!" said Monsieur de Clagny.

Étienne, nettled by the superior air assumed by Monsieur de Clagny, wanted to infuriate him by one of those cold-drawn jests which consist in defending an opinion in which we have no belief, simply to rouse the wrath of a poor man who argues in good faith; a regular journalist's pleasantry.

"If we take up the political attitude into which you would force yourself," he went on, without heeding the lawyer's remark, "and assume the part of Public Prosecutor of all the ages—for every Government has its public ministry—well, the Catholic religion is infected at its fountain-head by a startling instance of illegal union. In the opinion of King Herod, and of Pilate as representing the Roman Empire, Joseph's wife figured as an adulteress, since, by her own avowal, Joseph was not the father of Jesus. The heathen judge could no more recognize the Immaculate Conception than you yourself would admit the possibility of such a miracle if a new religion should nowadays be preached as based on a similar mystery. Do you suppose that a judge and jury in a police court would give credence to the operation of the Holy Ghost! And yet who can venture to assert that God will never again redeem mankind? Is it any better now than it was under Tiberius?"

"Your argument is blasphemy," said Monsieur de Clagny.

"I grant it," said the journalist, "but not with malicious intent. You cannot suppress historical fact. In my opinion, Pilate, when he sentenced Jesus, and Anytus—who spoke for the aristocratic party at Athens—when he insisted on the death of Socrates, both represented established social interests which held themselves legitimate, invested with co-operative powers, and obliged to defend themselves. Pilate and Anytus in their time were not less logical than the public prosecutors who demanded the heads of the sergeants of La Rochelle; who, at this day, are guillotining the republicans who take up arms against the throne as established by the revolution of July, and the innovators who aim at upsetting society for their own advantage under pretence of organizing it on a better footing. In the eyes of the great families of Greece and Rome, Socrates and Jesus were criminals; to those ancient aristocracies their opinions were akin to those of the Mountain; and if their followers had been victorious, they would have produced a little 'ninety-three' in the Roman Empire or in Attica."

"What are you trying to come to, monsieur?" asked the lawyer.

"To adultery!—For thus, monsieur, a Buddhist as he smokes his pipe may very well assert that the Christian religion is founded in adultery; as we believe that Mahomet is an impostor; that his Koran is an epitome of the Old Testament and the Gospels; and that God never had the least intention of constituting that camel-driver His Prophet."

"If there were many men like you in France—and there are more than enough, unfortunately—all government would be impossible."

"And there would be no religion at all," said Madame Piédefer, who had been making strangely wry faces all through this discussion.

"You are paining them very much," said Bianchon to Lousteau in an undertone. "Do not talk of religion; you are saying things that are enough to upset them."

"If I were a writer or a romancer," said Monsieur Gravier, "I should take the side of the luckless husbands. I, who have seen many things, and strange things too, know that among the ranks of deceived husbands there are some whose attitude is not devoid of energy, men who, at a crisis, can be very dramatic, to use one of your words, monsieur," he said, addressing Étienne.

"You are very right, my dear Monsieur Gravier," said Lousteau. "I never thought that deceived husbands were ridiculous; on the contrary, I think highly of them——"

"Do you not think a husband's confidence a sublime thing?" said Bianchon. "He believes in his wife, he does not suspect her, he trusts her implicitly. But if he is so weak as to trust her, you make game of him; if he is jealous and suspicious, you hate him; what, then, I ask you, is the happy medium for a man of spirit?"

"If Monsieur de Clagny had not just expressed such vehement disapproval of the immorality of stories in which the matrimonial compact is violated, I could tell you of a husband's revenge," said Lousteau.

Monsieur de Clagny threw the dice with a convulsive jerk, and dared not look up at the journalist.

"A story, from you!" cried Madame de la Baudraye. "I should hardly have dared to hope for such a treat——"

"It is not my story, madame; I am not clever enough to invent such a tragedy. It was told me—and how delightfully! —by one of our greatest writers, the finest literary musician of our day, Charles Nodier."

"Well, tell it," said Dinah. "I never met Monsieur Nodier, so you have no comparison to fear."

"Not long after the 18th Brumaire," Étienne began, "there was, as you know, a call to arms in Brittany and la Vendée. The First Consul, anxious before all things for peace in France, opened negotiations with the rebel chiefs, and took energetic military measures; but, while combining his plans of campaign with the insinuating charm of Italian diplomacy, he also set the Machiavelian springs of the police in movement, Fouché then being at its head. And none of these means were superfluous to stifle the fire of war then blazing in the West.

"At this time a young man of the Maillé family was despatched by the Chouans from Brittany to Saumur, to open communications between certain magnates of that town and its environs and the leaders of the Royalist party. The envoy was, in fact, arrested on the very day he landed—for he traveled by boat, disguised as a master mariner. However, as a man of practical intelligence, he had calculated all the risks of the undertaking; his passport and papers were all in order, and the men told off to take him were afraid of blundering.

"The Chevalier de Beauvoir—I now remember his name—had studied his part well; he appealed to the family whose name he had borrowed, persisted in his false address, and stood his examination so boldly that he would have been set at large but for the blind belief that the spies had in their instructions, which were unfortunately only too minute. In this dilemma the authorities were more ready to risk an arbitrary act than to let a man escape to whose capture the Minister attached great importance. In those days of liberty the agents of the powers in authority cared little enough for what

we now regard as *legal*. The Chevalier was therefore imprisoned provisionally, until the superior officials should come to some decision as to his identity. He had not long to wait for it; orders were given to guard the prisoner closely in spite of his denials.

"The Chevalier de Beauvoir was next transferred, in obedience to further orders, to the Castle of l'Escarpe, a name which sufficiently indicates its situation. This fortress, perched on very high rocks, has precipices for its trenches; it is reached on all sides by steep and dangerous paths; and, like every ancient castle, its principal gate has a drawbridge over a wide moat. The commandant of this prison, delighted to have charge of a man of family whose manners were most agreeable, who expressed himself well, and seemed highly educated, received the Chevalier as a godsend; he offered him the freedom of the place on parole, that they might together the better defy its dulness. The prisoner was more than content.

"Beauvoir was a loyal gentleman, but, unfortunately, he was also a very handsome youth. He had attractive features, a dashing air, a pleasing address, and extraordinary strength. Well made, active, full of enterprise, and loving danger, he would have made an admirable leader of guerillas, and was the very man for the part. The commandant gave his prisoner the most comfortable room, entertained him at his table, and at first had nothing but praise for the Vendéan. This officer was a Corsican and married; his wife was pretty and charming, and he thought her, perhaps, not to be trusted—at any rate, he was as jealous as a Corsican and a rather ill-looking soldier may be. The lady took a fancy to Beauvoir, and he found her very much to his taste; perhaps they loved! Love in a prison is quick work. Did they commit some imprudence? Was the sentiment they entertained something warmer than the superficial gallantry which is almost a duty of men towards women?

"Beauvoir never fully explained this rather obscure episode of the story; it is at least certain that the commandant thought himself justified in treating his prisoner with excessive severity. Beauvoir was placed in the dungeon, fed on

black bread and cold water, and fettered in accordance with the time-honored traditions of the treatment lavished on captives. His cell, under the fortress-yard, was vaulted with hard stone, the walls were of desperate thickness; the tower overlooked the precipice.

"When the luckless man had convinced himself of the impossibility of escape, he fell into those day-dreams which are at once the comfort and the crowning despair of prisoners. He gave himself up to the trifles which in such cases seem so important; he counted the hours and the days; he studied the melancholy trade of being prisoner; he became absorbed in himself, and learned the value of air and sunshine; then, at the end of a fortnight, he was attacked by that terrible malady, that fever for liberty, which drives prisoners to those heroic efforts of which the prodigious achievements seem to us impossible, though true, and which my friend the doctor" (and he turned to Bianchon) "would perhaps ascribe to some unknown forces too recondite for his physiological analysis to detect, some mysteries of the human will of which the obscurity baffles science."

Bianchon shook his head in negation.

"Beauvoir was eating his heart out, for death alone could set him free. One morning the turnkey, whose duty it was to bring him his food, instead of leaving him when he had given him his meagre pittance, stood with his arms folded, looking at him with strange meaning. Conversation between them was generally brief, and the warder never began it. The Chevalier was therefore greatly surprised when the man said to him: 'Of course, monsieur, you know your own business when you insist on being always called Monsieur Lebrun, or citizen Lebrun. It is no concern of mine; ascertaining your name is no part of my duty. It is all the same to me whether you call yourself Peter or Paul. If every man minds his own business, the cows will not stray. At the same time, *I* know,' said he, with a wink, 'that you are Monsieur Charles-Félix-Théodore, Chevalier de Beauvoir, and cousin to Madame la Duchesse de Maillé.—Heh?' he added after a short silence, during which he looked at his prisoner.

"Beauvoir, seeing that he was safe under lock and key, did not imagine that his position could be any the worse if his real name were known.

"'Well, and supposing I were the Chevalier de Beauvoir, what should I gain by that?' said he.

"'Oh, there is everything to be gained by it,' replied the jailer in an undertone. 'I have been paid to help you to get away; but wait a minute! If I were suspected in the smallest degree, I should be shot out of hand. So I have said that I will do no more in the matter than will just earn the money.—Look here,' said he, taking a small file out of his pocket, 'this is your key; with this you can cut through one of your bars. By the Mass, but it will not be an easy job,' he went on, glancing at the narrow loophole that let daylight into the dungeon.

"It was in a splayed recess under the deep cornice that ran round the top of the tower, between the brackets that supported the embrasures.

"'Monsieur,' said the man, 'you must take care to saw through the iron low enough to get your body through.'

"'I will get through, never fear,' said the prisoner.

"'But high enough to leave a stanchion to fasten a cord to, the warder went on.

"'And where is the cord?' asked Beauvoir.

"'Here,' said the man, throwing down a knotted rope. 'It is made of raveled linen, that you may be supposed to have contrived it yourself, and it is long enough. When you have got to the bottom knot, let yourself drop gently, and the rest you must manage for yourself. You will probably find a carriage somewhere in the neighborhood, and friends looking out for you. But I know nothing about that.—I need not remind you that there is a man-at-arms to the right of the tower. You will take care, of course, to choose a dark night, and wait till the sentinel is asleep. You must take your chance of being shot; but——'

"'All right! All right! At least I shall not rot here,' cried the young man.

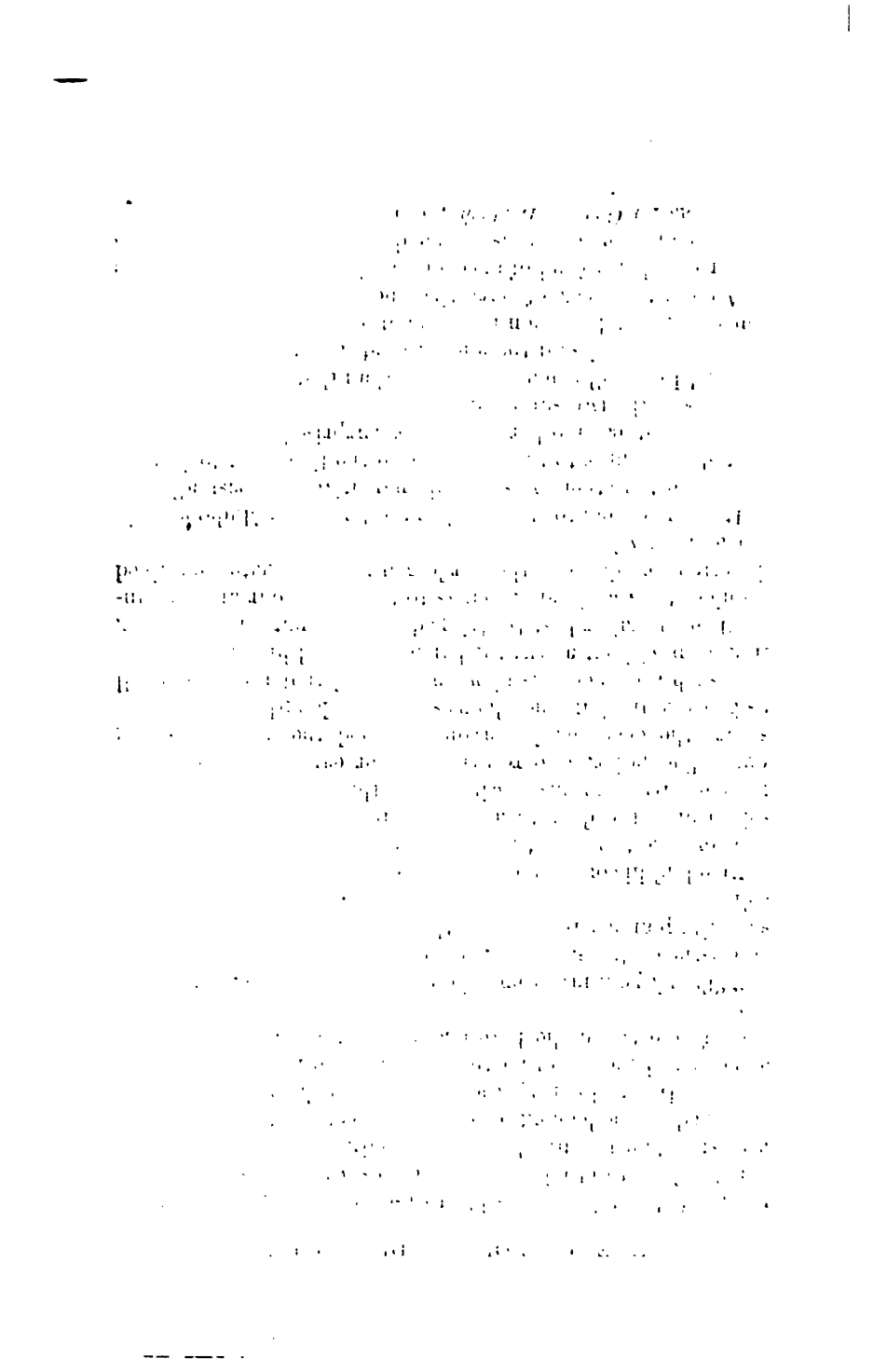
"'Well, that may happen nevertheless," replied the jailer, with a stupid expression.

"Beauvoir thought this was merely one of the aimless remarks that such folks indulge in. The hope of freedom filled him with such joy that he could not be troubled to consider the words of a man who was no more than a better sort of peasant. He set to work at once, and had filed the bars through in the course of the day. Fearing a visit from the Governor, he stopped up the breaches with bread crumb rubbed in rust to make it look like the iron; he hid his rope, and waited for a favorable night with the intensity of anticipation, the deep anguish of soul that makes a prisoner's life dramatic.

"At last, one murky night, an autumn night, he finished cutting through the bars, tied the cord firmly to the stump, and perched himself on the sill outside, holding on by one hand to the piece of iron remaining. Then he waited for the darkest hour of the night, when the sentinels would probably be asleep; this would be not long before dawn. He knew the hours of their rounds, the length of each watch, every detail with which prisoners, almost involuntarily, become familiar. He waited till the moment when one of the men-at-arms had spent two-thirds of his watch and gone into his box for shelter from the fog. Then, feeling sure that the chances were at the best for his escape, he let himself down knot by knot, hanging between earth and sky, and clinging to his rope with the strength of a giant. All was well. At the last knot but one, just as he was about to let himself drop, a prudent impulse led him to feel for the ground with his feet, and he found no footing. The predicament was awkward for a man bathed in sweat, tired, and perplexed, and in a position where his life was at stake on even chances. He was about to risk it, when a trivial incident stopped him; his hat fell off; happily, he listened for the noise it must make in striking the ground, and he heard not a sound.

"The prisoner felt vaguely suspicious as to this state of affairs. He began to wonder whether the Commandant had not laid a trap for him—but if so, why? Torn by doubts, he almost resolved to postpone the attempt till another night. At any rate, he would wait for the first gleam of day, when it

He perceived that there was a little interval of a hundred feet between the lowest knot and the pointed rocks below



would still not be impossible to escape. His great strength enabled him to climb up again to his window; still, he was almost exhausted by the time he gained the sill, where he crouched on the lookout, exactly like a cat on the parapet of a gutter. Before long, by the pale light of dawn, he perceived as he waved the rope that there was a little interval of a hundred feet between the lowest knot and the pointed rocks below.

"'Thank you, my friend the Governor!' said he, with characteristic coolness. Then, after a brief meditation on this skilfully-planned revenge, he thought it wise to return to his cell.

"He laid his outer clothes conspicuously on the bed, left the rope outside to make it seem that he had fallen, and hid himself behind the door to await the arrival of the treacherous turnkey, arming himself with one of the iron bars he had filed out. The jailer, who returned rather earlier than usual to secure the dead man's leavings, opened the door, whistling as he came in; but when he was at arm's length, Beauvoir hit him such a tremendous blow on the head that the wretch fell in a heap without a cry; the bar had cracked his skull.

"The Chevalier hastily stripped him and put on his clothes, mimicked his walk, and, thanks to the early hour and the undoubting confidence of the warders of the great gate, he walked out and away."

It did not seem to strike either the lawyer or Madame de la Baudraye that there was in this narrative the least allusion that should apply to them. Those in the little plot looked inquiringly at each other, evidently surprised at the perfect coolness of the two supposed lovers.

"Oh! I can tell you a better story than that," said Bianchon.

"Let us hear," said the audience, at a sign from Lousteau, conveying that Bianchon had a reputation as a story-teller.

Among the stock of narratives he had in store, for every clever man has a fund of anecdotes as Madame de la Baudraye had a collection of phrases, the doctor chose that which is known as *La Grande Bretêche,* and is so famous indeed, that

it was put on the stage at the *Gymnase-Dramatique* under the title of *Valentine*. So it is not necessary to repeat it here, though it was then new to the inhabitants of the Château d'Anzy. And it was told with the same finish of gesture and tone which had won such praise for Bianchon when at Mademoiselle des Touches' supper-party he had told it for the first time. The final picture of the Spanish grandee, starved to death where he stood in the cupboard walled up by Madame de Merret's husband, and that husband's last word as he replied to his wife's entreaty, "You swore on that crucifix that there was no one in the closet!" produced their full effect. There was a silent minute, highly flattering to Bianchon.

"Do you know, gentlemen," said Madame de la Baudraye, "love must be a mighty thing that it can tempt a woman to put herself in such a position?"

"I, who have certainly seen some strange things in the course of my life," said Gravier, "was cognizant in Spain of an adventure of the same kind."

"You come forward after two great performers," said Madame de la Baudraye, with coquettish flattery, as she glanced at the two Parisians. "But never mind—proceed."

"Some little time after his entry into Madrid," said the Receiver-General, "the Grand Duke of Berg invited the magnates of the capital to an entertainment given to the newly conquered city by the French army. In spite of the splendor of the affair, the Spaniards were not very cheerful; their ladies hardly danced at all, and most of the company sat down to cards. The gardens of the Duke's palace were so brilliantly illuminated, that the ladies could walk about in as perfect safety as in broad daylight. The fête was of imperial magnificence. Nothing was grudged to give the Spaniards a high idea of the Emperor, if they were to measure him by the standard of his officers.

"In an arbor near the house, between one and two in the morning, a party of French officers were discussing the chances of war, and the not too hopeful outlook prognosticated by the conduct of the Spaniards present at that grand ball.

"'I can only tell you,' said the surgeon-major of the company of which I was paymaster, 'I applied formally to Prince Murat only yesterday to be recalled. Without being afraid exactly of leaving my bones in the Peninsula, I would rather dress the wounds made by our worthy neighbors the Germans. Their weapons do not run quite so deep into the body as these Castilian daggers. Besides, a certain dread of Spain is, with me, a sort of superstition. From my earliest youth I have read Spanish books, and a heap of gloomy romances and tales of adventures in this country have given me a serious prejudice against its manners and customs.

"'Well, now, since my arrival in Madrid, I have already been, not indeed the hero, but the accomplice of a dangerous intrigue, as dark and mysterious as any romance by Lady [Mrs.] Radcliffe. I am apt to attend to my presentiments, and I am off to-morrow. Murat will not refuse me leave, for, thanks to our varied services, we always have influential friends.'

"'Since you mean to cut your stick, tell us what's up,' said an old Republican colonel, who cared not a rap for Imperial gentility and choice language.

"The surgeon-major looked about him cautiously, as if to make sure who were his audience, and being satisfied that no Spaniard was within hearing, he said:

"'We are none but Frenchmen—then, with pleasure, Colonel Hulot. About six days since, I was quietly going home, at about eleven at night, after leaving General Montcornet, whose hotel is but a few yards from mine. We had come away together from the Quartermaster-General's, where we had played rather high at *bouillotte*. Suddenly, at the corner of a narrow side-street, two strangers, or rather, two demons, rushed upon me and flung a large cloak round my head and arms. I yelled out, as you may suppose, like a dog that is thrashed, but the cloth smothered my voice, and I was lifted into a chaise with dexterous rapidity. When my two companions released me from the cloak, I heard these dreadful words spoken by a woman, in bad French:

"'"If you cry out, or if you attempt to escape, if you make the very least suspicious demonstration, the gentleman opposite to you will stab you without hesitation. So you had better keep quiet.—Now, I will tell you why you have been carried off. If you will take the trouble to put your hand out in this direction, you will find your case of instruments lying between us; we sent a messenger for them to your rooms, in your name. You will need them. We are taking you to a house that you may save the honor of a lady who is about to give birth to a child that she wishes to place in this gentleman's keeping without her husband's knowledge. Though monsieur rarely leaves his wife, with whom he is still passionately in love, watching over her with all the vigilance of Spanish jealousy, she has succeeded in concealing her condition; he believes her to be ill. You must bring the child into the world. The dangers of this enterprise do not concern us: only, you must obey us, otherwise the lover, who is sitting opposite to you in this carriage, and who does not understand a word of French, will kill you on the least rash movement."

"'"And who are you?" I asked, feeling for the speaker's hand, for her arm was inside the sleeve of a soldier's uniform.

"'"I am my lady's waiting-woman," said she, "and ready to reward you with my own person if you show yourself gallant and helpful in our necessities."

"'"Gladly," said I, seeing that I was inevitably started on a perilous adventure.

"'Under favor of the darkness, I felt whether the person and figure of the girl were in keeping with the idea I had formed of her from her tone of voice. The good soul had, no doubt, made up her mind from the first to accept all the chances of this strange act of kidnapping, for she kept silence very obligingly, and the coach had not been more than ten minutes on the way when she accepted and returned a very satisfactory kiss. The lover, who sat opposite to me, took no offence at an occasional quite involuntary kick; as he did not understand French, I conclude he paid no heed to them.

"'"I can be your mistress on one condition only," said the

woman, in reply to the nonsense I poured into her ear, carried away by the fervor of an improvised passion, to which everything was unpropitious.

"'"And what is it?"

"'"That you will never attempt to find out whose servant I am. If I am to go to you, it must be at night, and you must receive me in the dark."

"'"Very good," said I.

"'We had got as far as this, when the carriage drew up under a garden wall.

"'"You must allow me to bandage your eyes," said the maid. "You can lean on my arm, and I will lead you."

"'She tied a handkerchief over my eyes, fastening it in a tight knot at the back of my head. I heard the sound of a key being cautiously fitted to the lock of a little side door by the speechless lover who had sat opposite to me. In a moment the waiting-woman, whose shape was slender, and who walked with an elegant jauntiness'—*meneho,* as they call it," Monsieur Gravier explained in a superior tone, "a word which describes the swing which women contrive to give a certain part of their dress that shall be nameless.—'The waiting-woman'—it is the surgeon-major who is speaking," the narrator went on —"'led me along the gravel walks of a large garden, till at a certain spot she stopped. From the louder sound of our footsteps, I concluded that we were close to the house. "Now silence!" said she is a whisper, "and mind what you are about. Do not overlook one of my signals; I cannot speak without terrible danger for both of us, and at this moment your life is of the first importance." Then she added: "My mistress is in a room on the ground floor. To get into it we must pass through her husband's room and close to his bed. Do not cough, walk softly, and follow me closely, so as not to knock against the furniture or tread anywhere but on the carpets I laid down."

"'Here the lover gave an impatient growl, as a man annoyed by so much delay.

"'The woman said no more, I heard a door open, I felt the warm air of the house, and we stole in like thieves. Pres-

ently the girl's light hand removed the bandage. I found myself in a lofty and spacious room, badly lighted by a smoky lamp. The window was open, but the jealous husband had fitted it with iron bars. I was in the bottom of a sack, as it were.

"'On the ground a woman was lying on a mat; her head was covered with a muslin veil, but I could see her eyes through it full of tears and flashing with the brightness of stars; she held a handkerchief in her mouth, biting it so hard that her teeth were set in it: I never saw finer limbs, but her body was writhing with pain like a harp-string thrown on the fire. The poor creature had made a sort of struts of her legs by setting her feet against a chest of drawers, and with both hands she held on to the bar of a chair, her arms outstretched, with every vein painfully swelled. She might have been a criminal undergoing torture. But she did not utter a cry; there was not a sound but the dull cracking of her joints. There we stood, all three speechless and motionless. The husband snored with reassuring regularity. I wanted to study the waiting-woman's face, but she had put on a mask, which she had removed, no doubt, during our drive, and I could see nothing but a pair of black eyes and a pleasingly rounded figure.

"'The lover threw some towels over his mistress' legs and folded the muslin veil double over her face. As soon as I had examined the lady with care, I perceived from certain symptoms which I had noted once before on a very sad occasion in my life, that the infant was dead. I turned to the maid in order to tell her this. Instantly the suspicious stranger drew his dagger; but I had time to explain the matter to the woman, who explained in a word or two to him in a low voice. On hearing my opinion, a quick, slight shudder ran through him from head to foot like a lightning flash; I fancied I could see him turn pale under his black velvet mask.

"'The waiting-woman took advantage of a moment when he was bending in despair over the dying woman, who had turned blue, to point to some glasses of lemonade standing on

a table, at the same time shaking her head negatively. I understood that I was not to drink anything in spite of the dreadful thirst that parched my throat. The lover was thirsty too; he took an empty glass, poured out some fresh lemonade, and drank it off.

"'At this moment the lady had a violent attack of pain, which showed me that now was the time to operate. I summoned all my courage, and in about an hour had succeeded in delivering her of the child, cutting it up to extract it. The Spaniard no longer thought of poisoning me, understanding that I had saved the mother's life. Large tears fell on his cloak. The woman uttered no sound, but she trembled like a hunted animal, and was bathed in sweat.

"'At one horribly critical moment she pointed in the direction of her husband's room; he had turned in his sleep, and she alone had heard the rustle of the sheets, the creaking of the bed or of the curtain. We all paused, and the lover and the waiting-woman, through the eyeholes of their masks, gave each other a look that said, "If he wakes, shall we kill him?"

"'At that instant I put out my hand to take the glass of lemonade the Spaniard had drunk part of. He, thinking that I was about to take one of the full glasses, sprang forward like a cat, and laid his long dagger over the two poisoned goblets, leaving me his own, and signing to me to drink what was left. So much was conveyed by this quick action, and it was so full of good feeling, that I forgave him his atrocious schemes for killing me, and thus burying every trace of this event.

"'After two hours of care and alarms, the maid and I put her mistress to bed. The lover, forced into so perilous an adventure, had, to provide means in case of having to fly, a packet of diamonds stuck to paper; these he put into my pocket without my knowing it; and I may add parenthetically, that as I was ignorant of the Spaniard's magnificent gift, my servant stole the jewels the day after, and went off with a perfect fortune.

"'I whispered my instructions to the waiting-woman as to the further care of her patient, and wanted to be gone. The

maid remained with her mistress, which was not very reassuring, but I was on my guard. The lover made a bundle of the dead infant and the blood-stained clothes, tying it up tightly, and hiding it under his cloak; he passed his hand over my eyes as if to bid me to see nothing, and signed to me to take hold of the skirt of his coat. He went first out of the room, and I followed, not without a parting glance at my lady of an hour. She, seeing the Spaniard had gone out, snatched off her mask and showed me an exquisite face.

"'When I found myself in the garden, in the open air, I confess that I breathed as if a heavy load had been lifted from my breast. I followed my guide at a respectful distance, watching his least movement with keen attention. Having reached the little door, he took my hand and pressed a seal to my lips, set in a ring which I had seen him wearing on a finger of his left hand, and I gave him to understand that this significant sign would be obeyed. In the street two horses were waiting; we each mounted one. My Spaniard took my bridle, held his own between his teeth, for his right hand held the bloodstained bundle, and we went off at lightning speed.

"'I could not see the smallest object by which to retrace the road we came by. At dawn I found myself close by my own door, and the Spaniard fled towards the Atocha gate.'

"'And you saw nothing which could lead you to suspect who the woman was whom you had attended?' the Colonel asked of the surgeon.

"'One thing only,' he replied. 'When I turned the unknown lady over, I happened to remark a mole on her arm, about half-way down, as big as a lentil, and surrounded with brown hairs.'—At this instant the rash speaker turned pale. All our eyes, that had been fixed on his, followed his glance, and we saw a Spaniard, whose glittering eyes shone through a clump of orange-trees. On finding himself the object of our attention, the man vanished with the swiftness of a sylph. A young captain rushed in pursuit.

"'By Heaven!' cried the surgeon, 'that basilisk stare has chilled me through, my friends. I can hear bells ringing in my ears! I may take leave of you; you will bury me here!'

"'What a fool you are!' exclaimed Colonel Hulot. 'Falcon is on the track of the Spaniard who was listening, and he will call him to account.'

"'Well,' cried one and another, seeing the captain return quite out of breath.

"'The devil's in it,' said Falcon; 'the man went through a wall, I believe! As I do not suppose that he is a wizard, I fancy he must belong to the house! He knows every corner and turning, and easily escaped.'

"'I am done for,' said the surgeon, in a gloomy voice.

"'Come, come, keep calm, Béga,' said I (his name was Béga), 'we will sit on watch with you till you leave. We will not leave you this evening.'

"In point of fact, three young officers who had been losing at play went home with the surgeon to his lodgings, and one of us offered to stay with him.

"Within two days Béga had obtained his recall to France; he made arrangements to travel with a lady to whom Murat had given a strong escort, and had just finished dinner with a party of friends, when his servant came to say that a young lady wished to speak to him. The surgeon and the three officers went down suspecting mischief. The stranger could only say, 'Be on your guard——' when she dropped down dead. It was the waiting-woman, who, finding she had been poisoned, had hoped to arrive in time to warn her lover.

"'Devil take it!' cried Captain Falcon, 'that is what I call love! No woman on earth but a Spaniard can run about with a dose of poison in her inside!'

"Béga remained strangely pensive. To drown the dark presentiments that haunted him, he sat down to table again, and with his companions drank immoderately. The whole party went early to bed, half drunk.

"In the middle of the night the hapless Béga was aroused by the sharp rattle of the curtain rings pulled violently along the rods. He sat up in bed, in the mechanical trepidation which we all feel on waking with such a start. He saw standing before him a Spaniard wrapped in a cloak, who fixed on

him the same burning gaze that he had seen through the bushes.

"Béga shouted out, 'Help, help, come at once, friends!' But the Spaniard answered his cry of distress with a bitter laugh.—'Opium grows for all!' said he.

"Having thus pronounced sentence as it were, the stranger pointed to the three other men sleeping soundly, took from under his cloak the arm of a woman, freshly amputated, and held it out to Béga, pointing to a mole like that he had so rashly described. 'Is it the same?' he asked. By the light of the lantern the man had set on the bed, Béga recognized the arm, and his speechless amazement was answer enough.

"Without waiting for further information, the lady's husband stabbed him to the heart."

"You must tell that to the marines!" said Lousteau. "It needs their robust faith to swallow it! Can you tell me which told the tale, the dead man or the Spaniard?"

"Monsieur," replied the Receiver-General, "I nursed poor Béga, who died five days after in dreadful suffering.—That is not the end.

"At the time of the expedition sent out to restore Ferdinand VII. I was appointed to a place in Spain; but, happily for me, I had got no further than Tours when I was promised the post of Receiver here at Sancerre. On the eve of setting out I was at a ball at Madame de Listomère's, where we were to meet several Spaniards of high rank. On rising from the card-table, I saw a Spanish grandee, an *afrancesado* in exile, who had been about a fortnight in Touraine. He had arrived very late at this ball—his first appearance in society—accompanied by his wife, whose right arm was perfectly motionless. Everybody made way in silence for this couple, whom we all watched with some excitement. Imagine a picture by Murillo come to life. Under black and hollow brows the man's eyes were like a fixed blaze; his face looked dried up, his bald skull was red, and his frame was a terror to behold, he was so emaciated. His wife—no, you cannot imagine her. Her figure had the supple swing for which the Spaniards created the

word *mencho;* though pale, she was still beautiful; her complexion was dazzlingly fair—a rare thing in a Spaniard; and her gaze, full of the Spanish sun, fell on you like a stream of melted lead.

"'Madame,' said I to her, towards the end of the evening, 'what occurrence led to the loss of your arm?'

"'I lost it in the war of independence,' said she."

"Spain is a strange country," said Madame de la Baudraye. "It still shows traces of Arab manners."

"Oh!" said the journalist, laughing, "the mania for cutting off arms is an old one there. It turns up again every now and then like some of our newspaper hoaxes, for the subject has given plots for plays on the Spanish stage so early as 1570——"

"Then do you think me capable of inventing such a story?" said Monsieur Gravier, nettled by Lousteau's impertinent tone.

"Quite incapable of such a thing," said the journalist with grave irony.

"Pooh!" said Bianchon, "the inventions of romances and play-writers are quite as often transferred from their books and pieces into real life, as the events of real life are made use of on the stage or adapted to a tale. I have seen the comedy of *Tartufe* played out—with the exception of the close; Orgon's eyes could not be opened to the truth."

"And the tragi-comedy of *Adolphe* by Benjamin Constant is constantly enacted," cried Lousteau.

"And do you suppose," asked Madame de la Baudraye, "that such adventures as Monsieur Gravier has related could ever occur now, and in France?"

"Dear me!" cried Clagny, "of the ten or twelve startling crimes that are annually committed in France, quite half are mixed up with circumstances at least as extraordinary as these, and often outdoing them in romantic details. Indeed, is not this proved by the reports in the *Gazette des Tribunaux* —the Police news—in my opinion, one of the worst abuses of the Press? This newspaper, which was started only in 1826

or '27, was not in existence when I began my professional career, and the facts of the crime I am about to speak of were not known beyond the limits of the department where it was committed.

"In the quarter of Saint-Pierre-des-Corps at Tours a woman whose husband had disappeared at the time when the army of the Loire was disbanded, and who had mourned him deeply, was conspicuous for her excess of devotion. When the mission priests went through all the provinces to restore the crosses that had been destroyed and to efface the traces of revolutionary impiety, this widow was one of their most zealous proselytes, she carried a cross and nailed to it a silver heart pierced by an arrow; and, for a long time after she went every evening to pray at the foot of the cross which was erected behind the Cathedral apse.

"At last, overwhelmed by remorse, she confessed to a horrible crime. She had killed her husband, as Fualdès was murdered, by bleeding him; she had salted the body and packed it in pieces into old casks, exactly as if it had been pork; and for a long time she had taken a piece every morning and thrown it into the Loire. Her confessor consulted his superiors, and told her that it would be his duty to inform the public prosecutor. The woman awaited the action of the Law. The public prosecutor and the examining judge, on examining the cellar, found the husband's head still in pickle in one of the casks.—'Wretched woman,' said the judge to the accused, 'since you were so barbarous as to throw your husband's body piecemeal into the river, why did you not get rid of the head? Then there would have been no proof.'

"'I often tried, monsieur,' said she, 'but it was too heavy,'"

"Well, and what became of the woman?" asked the two Parisians.

"She was sentenced and executed at Tours," replied the lawyer; "but her repentance and piety had attracted interest in spite of her monstrous crime."

"And do you suppose," said Bianchon, "that we know all the tragedies that are played out behind the curtain of private

life that the public never lifts?—It seems to me that human justice is ill adapted to judge of crimes as between husband and wife. It has every right to intervene as the police; but in equity it knows nothing of the heart of the matter."

"The victim has in many cases been for so long the tormentor," said Madame de la Baudraye guilelessly, "that the crime would sometimes seem almost excusable if the accused could tell all."

This reply, led up to by Bianchon and by the story which Clagny had told, left the two Parisians excessively puzzled as to Dinah's position.

At bedtime council was held, one of those discussions which take place in the passages of old country-houses where the bachelors linger, candle in hand, for mysterious conversations.

Monsieur Gravier was now informed of the object in view during this entertaining evening which had brought Madame de la Baudraye's innocence to light.

"But, after all," said Lousteau, "our hostess' serenity may indicate deep depravity instead of the most child-like innocence. The Public Prosecutor looks to me quite capable of suggesting that little La Baudraye should be put in pickle——"

"He is not to return till to-morrow; who knows what may happen in the course of the night?" said Gatien.

"We will know!" cried Monsieur Gravier.

In the life of a country house a number of practical jokes are considered admissible, some of them odiously treacherous. Monsieur Gravier, who had seen so much of the world, proposed setting seals on the doors of Madame de la Baudraye and of the Public Prosecutor. The ducks that denounced the poet Ibycus are as nothing in comparison with the single hair that these country spies fasten across the opening of a door by means of two little flattened pills of wax, fixed so high up, or so low down, that the trick is never suspected. If the gallant comes out of his own door and opens the other, the broken hair tells the tale.

When everybody was supposed to be asleep, the doctor, the journalist, the receiver of taxes, and Gatien came barefoot, like robbers, and silently fastened up the two doors, agreeing to come again at five in the morning to examine the state of the fastenings. Imagine their astonishment and Gatien's delight when all four, candle in hand, and with hardly any clothes on, came to look at the hairs, and found them in perfect preservation on both doors.

"Is it the same wax?" asked Monsieur Gravier.

"Are they the same hairs?" asked Lousteau.

"Yes," replied Gatien.

"This quite alters the matter!" cried Lousteau. "You have been beating the bush for a will-o'-the wisp."

Monsieur Gravier and Gatien exchanged questioning glances which were meant to convey, "Is there not something offensive to us in that speech? Ought we to laugh or to be angry?"

"If Dinah is virtuous," said the journalist in a whisper to Bianchon, "she is worth an effort on my part to pluck the fruit of her first love."

The idea of carrying by storm a fortress that had for nine years stood out against the besiegers of Sancerre smiled on Lousteau.

With this notion in his head, he was the first to go down and into the garden, hoping to meet his hostess. And this chance fell out all the more easily because Madame de la Baudraye on her part wished to converse with her critic. Half such chances are planned.

"You were out shooting yesterday, monsieur," said Madame de la Baudraye. "This morning I am rather puzzled as to how to find you any new amusement; unless you would like to come to La Baudraye, where you may study more of our provincial life than you can see here, for you have made but one mouthful of my absurdities. However, the saying about the handsomest girl in the world is not less true of the poor provincial woman!"

"That little simpleton Gatien has, I suppose, repeated to you a speech I made simply to make him confess that he

adored you," said Étienne. "Your silence, during dinner the day before yesterday and throughout the evening, was enough to betray one of those indiscretions which we never commit in Paris.—What can I say? I do not flatter myself that you will understand me. In fact, I laid a plot for the telling of all those stories yesterday solely to see whether I could rouse you and Monsieur de Clagny to a pang of remorse. —Oh! be quite easy; your innocence is fully proved.

"If you had the slightest fancy for that estimable magistrate, you would have lost all your value in my eyes.—I love perfection.

"You do not, you cannot love that cold, dried-up, taciturn little usurer on wine casks and land, who would leave any man in the lurch for twenty-five centimes on a renewal. Oh, I have fully recognized Monsieur de la Baudraye's similarity to a Parisian bill-discounter; their nature is identical.—At eight-and-twenty, handsome, well conducted, and childless—I assure you, madame, I never saw the problem of virtue more admirably expressed.—The author of *Paquita la Sevillane* must have dreamed many dreams!

"I can speak of such things without the hypocritical gloss lent them by young men, for I am old before my time. I have no illusions left. Can a man have any illusions in the trade I follow?"

By opening the game in this tone, Lousteau cut out all excursions in the *Pays de Tendre,* where genuine passion beats the bush so long; he went straight to the point and placed himself in a position to force the offer of what women often make a man pray for, for years; witness the hapless Public Prosecutor, to whom the greatest favor had consisted in clasping Dinah's hand to his heart more tenderly than usual as they walked, happy man!

And Madame de la Baudraye, to be true to her reputation as a Superior Woman, tried to console the Manfred of the Press by prophesying such a future of love as he had not had in his mind.

"You have sought pleasure," said she, "but you have never

loved. Believe me, true love often comes late in life. Remember Monsieur de Gentz, who fell in love in his old age with Fanny Ellsler, and left the Revolution of July to take its course while he attended the dancer's rehearsals."

"It seems to me unlikely," replied Lousteau. "I can still believe in love, but I have ceased to believe in woman. There are in me, I suppose, certain defects which hinder me from being loved, for I have often been thrown over. Perhaps I have too strong a feeling for the ideal—like all men who have looked too closely into reality——"

Madame de la Baudraye at last heard the mind of a man who, flung into the wittiest Parisian circles, represented to her its most daring axioms, its almost artless depravity, its advanced convictions; who, if he were not really superior, acted superiority extremely well. Étienne, performing before Dinah, had all the success of a first night. *Paquita* of Sancerre scented the storms, the atmosphere of Paris. She spent one of the most delightful days of her life with Lousteau and Bianchon, who told her strange tales about the great men of the day, the anecdotes which will some day form the *Ana* of our century; sayings and doings that were the common talk of Paris, but quite new to her.

Of course, Lousteau spoke very ill of the great female celebrity of Le Berry, with the obvious intention of flattering Madame de la Baudraye and leading her into literary confidences, by suggesting that she could rival so great a writer. This praise intoxicated Madame de la Baudraye; and Monsieur de Clagny, Monsieur Gravier, and Gatien, all thought her warmer in her manner to Étienne than she had been on the previous day. Dinah's three *attachés* greatly regretted having all gone to Sancerre to blow the trumpet in honor of the evening at Anzy; nothing, to hear them, had ever been so brilliant. The Hours had fled on feet so light that none had marked their pace. The two Parisians they spoke of as perfect prodigies.

These exaggerated reports loudly proclaimed on the Mall brought sixteen persons to Anzy that evening, some in family

coaches, some in wagonettes, and a few bachelors on hired saddle horses. By about seven o'clock this provincial company had made a more or less graceful entry into the huge Anzy drawing-room, which Dinah, warned of the invasion, had lighted up, giving it all the lustre it was capable of by taking the holland covers off the handsome furniture, for she regarded this assembly as one of her great triumphs. Lousteau, Bianchon, and Dinah exchanged meaning looks as they studied the attitudes and listened to the speeches of these visitors, attracted by curiosity.

What invalided ribbons, what ancestral laces, what ancient flowers, more imaginative than imitative, were boldly displayed on some perennial caps! The Présidente Boirouge, Bianchon's cousin, exchanged a few words with the doctor, from whom she extracted some "advice gratis" by expatiating on certain pains in the chest, which she declared were nervous, but which he ascribed to chronic indigestion.

"Simply drink a cup of tea every day an hour after dinner, as the English do, and you will get over it, for what you suffer from is an English malady," Bianchon replied very gravely.

"He is certainly a great physician," said the Présidente, coming back to Madame de Clagny, Madame Popinot-Chandier, and Madame Gorju, the Mayor's wife.

"They say," replied Madame de Clagny behind her fan, "that Dinah sent for him, not so much with a view to the elections as to ascertain why she has no children."

In the first excitement of this success, Lousteau introduced the great doctor as the only possible candidate at the ensuing elections. But Bianchon, to the great satisfaction of the new Sous-préfet, remarked that it seemed to him almost impossible to give up science in favor of politics.

"Only a physician without a practice," said he, "could care to be returned as a deputy. Nominate statesmen, thinkers, men whose knowledge is universal, and who are capable of placing themselves on the high level which a legislator should occupy. That is what is lacking in our Chambers, and what our country needs."

Two or three young ladies, some of the younger men, and the elder women stared at Lousteau as if he were a mountebank.

"Monsieur Gatien Boirouge declares that Monsieur Lousteau makes twenty thousand francs a year by his writings," observed the Mayor's wife to Madame de Clagny. "Can you believe it?"

"Is it possible? Why, a Public Prosecutor gets but a thousand crowns!"

"Monsieur Gatien," said Madame Chandier, "get Monsieur Lousteau to talk a little louder. I have not heard him yet."

"What pretty boots he wears," said Mademoiselle Chandier to her brother, "and how they shine!"

"Yes—patent leather."

"Why haven't you the same?"

Lousteau began to feel that he was too much on show, and saw in the manners of the good townsfolk indications of the desires that had brought them there.

"What trick can I play them?" thought he.

At this moment the footman, so called—a farm-servant put into livery—brought in the letters and papers, and among them a packet of proof, which the journalist left for Bianchon; for Madame de la Baudraye, on seeing the parcel, of which the form and string were obviously from the printers, exclaimed:

"What, does literature pursue you even here?"

"Not literature," replied he, "but a review in which I am now finishing a story to come out ten days hence. I have reached the stage of *'To be concluded in our next,'* so I was obliged to give my address to the printer. Oh, we eat very hard-earned bread at the hands of these speculators in black and white! I will give you a description of these editors of magazines."

"When will the conversation begin?" Madame de Clagny asked of Dinah, as one might ask, "When do the fireworks go off?"

"I fancied we should hear some amusing stories," said Madame Popinot to her cousin, the Présidente Boirouge.

At this moment, when the good folks of Sancerre were beginning to murmur like an impatient pit, Lousteau observed that Bianchon was lost in a meditation inspired by the wrapper round the proofs.

"What is it?" asked Étienne.

"Why, here is the most fascinating romance possible on some spoiled proof used to wrap yours in. Here, read it. *Olympia, or Roman Revenge.*"

"Let us see," said Lousteau, taking the sheet the doctor held out to him, and he read aloud as follows:—

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cavern. Rinaldo, indignant at his companions' cowardice, for they had no courage but in the open field, and dared not venture into Rome, looked at them with scorn.

"Then I go alone?" said he. He seemed to reflect, and then he went on: "You are poor wretches. I shall proceed alone, and have the rich booty to myself.—You hear me! Farewell."

"My Captain," said Lamberti, "if you should be captured without having succeeded?"

"God protects me!" said Rinaldo, pointing to the sky.

With these words he went out, and on his way he met the steward

"That is the end of the page," said Lousteau, to whom every one had listened devoutly.

"He is reading his work to us," said Gatien to Madame Popinot-Chandier's son.

"From the first word, ladies," said the journalist, jumping at an opportunity of mystifying the natives, "it is evident that the brigands are in a cave. But how careless romancers of that date were as to details which are nowadays so closely, so elaborately studied under the name of 'local color.' If the robbers were in a cavern, instead of pointing to the sky he ought to have pointed to the vault above him.—In spite of this inaccuracy, Rinaldo strikes me as a man of spirit, and his appeal to God is quite Italian. There must have been a touch of local color in this romance. Why, what with brigands, and a cavern, and one Lamberti who could foresee future possibilities—there is a whole melodrama in that page. Add to these elements a little intrigue, a peasant maiden with her hair dressed high, short skirts, and a hundred or so of bad couplets.—Oh! the public would crowd to see it! And then Rinaldo —how well the name suits Lafont! By giving him black whiskers, tightly-fitting trousers, a cloak, a moustache, a pistol, and a peaked hat—if the manager of the Vaudeville Theatre were but bold enough to pay for a few newspaper articles, that would secure fifty performances, and six thousand francs for the author's rights, if only I were to cry it up in my columns.

"To proceed:—

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The Duchess of Bracciano found her glove. Adolphe, who had brought her back to the orange grove, might certainly have supposed that there was some purpose in her forgetfulness, for at this moment the arbor was deserted. The sound of the festivities was audible in the distance. The puppet show that had been promised had attracted all the guests to the ballroom. Never had Olympia looked more beautiful.

> Her lover's eyes met hers with an answering glow, and they understood each other. There was a moment of silence, delicious to their souls, and impossible to describe. They sat down on the same bench where they had sat in the presence of the Cavaliere Paluzzi and the

"Devil take it! Our Rinaldo has vanished!" cried Lousteau. "But a literary man once started by this page would make rapid progress in the comprehension of the plot. The Duchesse Olympia is a lady who could intentionally forget her gloves in a deserted arbor."

"Unless she may be classed between the oyster and head-clerk of an office, the two creatures nearest to marble in the zoological kingdom, it is impossible not to discern in Olympia—" Bianchon began.

"A woman of thirty," Madame de la Baudraye hastily interposed, fearing some all too medical term.

"Then Adolphe must be two-and-twenty," the doctor went on, "for an Italian woman at thirty is equivalent to a Parisian of forty."

"From these two facts, the romance may easily be reconstructed," said Lousteau. "And this Cavaliere Paluzzi—what a man!—The style is weak in these two passages; the author was perhaps a clerk in the Excise Office, and wrote the novel to pay his tailor!"

"In his time," said Bianchon, "the censor flourished; you must show as much indulgence to a man who underwent the ordeal by scissors in 1805 as to those who went to the scaffold in 1793."

"Do you understand in the least?" asked Madame Gorju timidly of Madame de Clagny.

The Public Prosecutor's wife, who, to use a phrase of Monsieur Gravier's, might have put a Cossack to flight in 1814, straightened herself in her chair like a horseman in his

stirrups, and made a face at her neighbor, conveying, "They are looking at us; we must smile as if we understood."

"Charming!" said the Mayoress to Gatien. "Pray go on, Monsieur Lousteau."

Lousteau looked at the two women, two Indian idols, and contrived to keep his countenance. He thought it desirable to say, "Attention!" before going on as follows:—

dress rustled in the silence. Suddenly Cardinal Borborigano stood before the Duchess.

"His face was gloomy, his brow was dark with clouds, and a bitter smile lurked in his wrinkles.

"Madam," said he, "you are under suspicion. If you are guilty, fly. If you are not, still fly; because, whether criminal or innocent, you will find it easier to defend yourself from a distance."

"I thank your Eminence for your solicitude," said she. "The Duke of Bracciano will reappear when I find it needful to prove that he is alive."

"Cardinal Borborigano!" exclaimed Bianchon. "By the Pope's keys! If you do not agree with me that there is a magnificent creation in the very name, if at those words *dress rustled in the silence* you do not feel all the poetry thrown into the part of Schedoni by Mrs. Radcliffe in *The Black Penitent,* you do not deserve to read a romance."

"For my part," said Dinah, who had some pity on the eighteen faces gazing up at Lousteau, "I see how the story is progressing. I know it all. I am in Rome; I can see the body of a murdered husband whose wife, as bold as she

is wicked, has made her bed on the crater of a volcano. Every night, at every kiss, she says to herself, 'All will be discovered!'"

"Can you see her," said Lousteau, "clasping Monsieur Adolphe in her arms, to her heart, throwing her whole life into a kiss?—Adolphe I see as a well-made young man, but not clever—the sort of man an Italian woman likes. Rinaldo hovers behind the scenes of a plot we do not know, but which must be as full of incident as a melodrama by Pixérécourt. Or we can imagine Rinaldo crossing the stage in the background like a figure in one of Victor Hugo's plays."

"He, perhaps, is the husband," exclaimed Madame de la Baudraye.

"Do you understand anything of it all?" Madame Piédefer asked of the Présidente.

"Why, it is charming!" said Dinah to her mother.

All the good folks of Sancerre sat with eyes as large as five-franc pieces.

"Go on, I beg," said the hostess.

Lousteau went on:—

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"Your key——"

"Have you lost it?"

"It is in the arbor."

"Let us hasten."

"Can the Cardinal have taken it?"

"No, here it is."

"What danger we have escaped!"

Olympia looked at the key, and fancied she recognized it as her own. But Rinaldo had changed it; his cunning had triumphed; he had the right key. Like a modern Cartouche, he was no less skilful than bold, and suspecting that nothing but a vast treasure could require a duchess to carry it constantly at her belt.

"Guess!" cried Lousteau. "The corresponding page is not here. We must look to page 212 to relieve our anxiety."

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"If the key had been lost?"

"He would now be a dead man."

"Dead? But ought you not to grant the last request he made, and to give him his liberty on the conditions——"

"You do not know him."

"But——"

"Silence! I took you for my lover, not for my confessor."

Adolphe was silent.

"And then comes an exquisite galloping goat, a tailpiece drawn by Normand, and cut by Duplat.—The names are signed," said Lousteau.

"Well, and then?" said such of the audience as understood.

"That is the end of the chapter," said Lousteau. "The fact of this tailpiece changes my views as to the authorship. To have his book got up, under the Empire, with vignettes engraved on wood, the writer must have been a Councillor of State, or Madame Barthélemy-Hadot, or the late lamented Desforges, or Sewrin."

"'Adolphe was silent.'—Ah!" cried Bianchon, "the Duchess must have been under thirty."

"If there is no more, invent a conclusion," said Madame de la Baudraye.

"You see," said Lousteau, "the waste sheet has been printed fair on one side only. In printer's lingo, it is a back sheet, or, to make it clearer, the other side which would have to be printed is covered all over with pages printed one above another, all experiments in making up. It would take too long to explain to you all the complications of a making-up

sheet; but you may understand that it will show no more trace of the first twelve pages that were printed on it than you would in the least remember the first stroke of the bastinado if a Pasha had condemned you to have fifty on the soles of your feet."

"I am quite bewildered," said Madame Popinot-Chandier to Monsieur Gravier. "I am vainly trying to connect the Councillor of State, the Cardinal, the key, and the making-up——"

"You have not the key to the jest," said Monsieur Gravier. "Well! no more have I, fair lady, if that can comfort you."

"But here is another sheet," said Bianchon, hunting on the table where the proofs had been laid.

"Capital!" said Lousteau, "and it is complete and uninjured. It is signed IV.; J, Second Edition. Ladies, the figure IV. means that this is part of the fourth volume. The letter J, the tenth letter of the alphabet, shows that this is the tenth sheet. And it is perfectly clear to me, that in spite of any publisher's tricks, this romance, in four duodecimo volumes, had a great success, since it came to a second edition.—We will read on and find a clue to the mystery.

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corridor; but finding that he was pursued by the Duchess' people

"Oh, get along!"

"But," said Madame de la Baudraye, "some important events have taken place between your waste sheet and this page."

"This complete sheet, madame, this precious made-up sheet. But does the waste sheet in which the Duchess forgets her gloves in the arbor belong to the fourth volume? Well, deuce take it—to proceed.

Rinaldo saw no safer refuge than to make forthwith for the cellar where the treasures of the Bracciano fam-

> ily no doubt lay hid. As light of foot as Camilla sung by the Latin poet, he flew to the entrance to the Baths of Vespasian. The torchlight already flickered on the walls when Rinaldo, with the readiness bestowed on him by nature, discovered the door concealed in the stonework, and suddenly vanished. A hideous thought then flashed on Rinaldo's brain like lightning rending a cloud: He was imprisoned! He felt the wall with uneasy haste

"Yes, this made-up sheet follows the waste sheet. The last page of the damaged sheet was 212, and this is 217. In fact, since Rinaldo, who in the earlier fragment stole the key of the Duchess' treasure by exchanging it for another very much like it, is now—on the made-up sheet—in the palace of the Dukes of Bracciano, the story seems to me to be advancing to a conclusion of some kind. I hope it is as clear to you as it becomes to me.—I understand that the festivities are over, the lovers have returned to the Bracciano Palace; it is night—one o'clock in the morning. Rinaldo will have a good time."

"And Adolphe too!" said Président Boirouge, who was considered rather free in his speech.

"And the style!" said Bianchon.—"Rinaldo, who saw *no better refuge than to make for the cellar.*"

"It is quite clear that neither Maradan, nor Treuttel and Wurtz, nor Doguereau, were the printers," said Lousteau, "for they employ correctors who revised the proofs, a luxury in which our publishers might very well indulge, and the writers of the present day, would benefit greatly. Some scrubby pamphlet printer on the Quay——"

"What quay?" a lady asked of her neighbor. "They spoke of baths——"

"Pray go on," said Madame de la Baudraye.

"At any rate, it is not by a councillor," said Bianchon.

"It may be by Madame Hadot," replied Lousteau.

"What has Madame Hadot of La Charité to do with it?" the Présidente asked of her son.

"This Madame Hadot, my dear friend," the hostess answered, "was an authoress, who lived at the time of the Consulate."

"What, did women write in the Emperor's time?" asked Madame Popinot-Chandier.

"What of Madame de Genlis and Madame de Staël?" cried the Public Prosecutor, piqued on Dinah's account by this remark.

"To be sure!"

"I beg you to go on," said Madame de la Baudraye to Lousteau.

Lousteau went on saying: "Page 218.

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>
> and gave a shriek of despair when he had vainly sought any trace of a secret spring. It was impossible to ignore the horrible truth. The door, cleverly constructed to serve the vengeful purposes of the Duchess, could not be opened from within. Rinaldo laid his cheek against the wall in various spots; nowhere could he feel the warmer air from the passage. He had hoped he might find a crack that would show him where there was an opening in the wall, but nothing, nothing! The whole seemed to be of one block of marble.
>
> Then he gave a hollow roar like that of a hyæna——

"Well, we fancied that the cry of the hyæna was a recent invention of our own!" said Lousteau, "and it was already

known to the literature of the Empire. It is even introduced with a certain skill in natural history, as we see in the word *hollow.*"

"Make no more comments, monsieur," said Madame de la Baudraye.

"There, you see!" cried Bianchon. "Interest, the romantic demon, has you by the collar, as he had me a while ago."

"Read on," cried de Clagny, "I understand."

"What a coxcomb!" said the Presiding Judge in a whisper to his neighbor the Sous-préfet.

"He wants to please Madame de la Baudraye," replied the new Sous-préfet.

"Well, then, I will read straight on," said Lousteau solemnly.

Everybody listened in dead silence.

A deep groan answered Rinaldo's cry, but in his alarm he took it for an echo, so weak and hollow was the sound. It could not proceed from any human breast.

"Santa Maria!" said the voice.

"If I stir from this spot I shall never find it again," thought Rinaldo, when he had recovered his usual presence of mind. "If I knock, I shall be discovered. What am I to do?"

"Who is here?" asked the voice.

"Hallo!" cried the brigand; "do the toads here talk?"

"I am the Duke of Bracciano. Whoever you may be, if you are not a follower of the Duchess', in the name of all the saints, come towards me."

"I should have to know where to find you, Monsieur le Duc," said Rinaldo, with the insolence of a man who knows himself to be necessary.

"I can see you, my friend, for my eyes are accustomed to the darkness. Listen: walk straight forward—good; now turn to the left—come on—this way. There, we are close to each other."

Rinaldo putting out his hands as a precaution, touched some iron bars.

"I am being deceived," cried the bandit.

"No, you are touching my cage.

Sit down on a broken shaft of porphyry that is there."

"How can the Duke of Bracciano be in a cage?" asked the brigand.

"My friend, I have been here for thirty months, standing up, unable to sit down—— But you, who are you?"

"I am Rinaldo, prince of the Campagna, the chief of four-and-twenty brave men whom the law describes as miscreants, whom all the ladies admire, and whom judges hang in obedience to an old habit."

"God be praised! I am saved. An honest man would have been afraid, whereas I am sure of coming to an understanding with you," cried the Duke. "Oh, my worthy

deliverer, you must be armed to the teeth."

"*E verissimo*" (most true).

"Do you happen to have——"

"Yes; files, pincers—*Corpo di Bacco!* I came to borrow the treasures of the Bracciani on a long loan."

"You will earn a handsome share of them very legitimately, my good Rinaldo, and we may possibly go man hunting together——"

"You surprise me, Eccellenza!"

"Listen to me, Rinaldo. I will say nothing of the craving for vengeance that gnaws at my heart. I have been here for thirty months —you too are Italian—you will un-

derstand me! Alas, my friend, my fatigue and my horrible incarceration are as nothing in comparison with the rage that devours my soul. The Duchess of Bracciano is still one of the most beautiful women in Rome. I loved her well enough to be jealous——"

"You, her husband?"

"Yes, I was wrong, no doubt."

"It is not the correct thing, to be sure," said Rinaldo.

"My jealousy was roused by the Duchess' conduct," the Duke went on. "The event proved me right. A young Frenchman fell in love with Olympia, and she loved him. I had proofs of their reciprocal affection

"Pray excuse me, ladies," said Lousteau, "but I find it impossible to go on without remarking to you how direct this Empire literature is, going to the point without any details, a characteristic, as it seems to me, of a primitive time. The literature of that period holds a place between the summaries of chapters in *Télémaque* and the categorical reports of a public office. It had ideas, but refrained from expressing them, it was so scornful! It was observant, but would not communicate its observations to any one, it was so miserly! Nobody but Fouché ever mentioned what he had observed. 'At that time,' to quote the words of one of the most imbecile critics in the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* 'literature was content with a clear sketch and the simple outline of all antique statues. It did not dance over its periods.'—I should think not! It had no periods to dance over. It had no words to make play with. You were plainly told that Lubin loved Toinette; that Toinette did not love Lubin; that Lubin killed Toinette and the police caught Lubin, who was put in prison, tried at the assizes, and guillotined.—A strong sketch, a clear outline! What a noble drama! Well, in these days the barbarians make words sparkle."

"Like hair in a frost," said Monsieur de Clagny.

"So those are the airs you affect?"* retorted Lousteau.

"What can he mean?" asked Madame de Clagny, puzzled by this vile pun.

"I seem to be walking in the dark," replied the Mayoress.

"The jest would be lost in an explanation," remarked Gatien.

"Nowadays," Lousteau went on, "a novelist draws characters, and instead of a 'simple outline,' he unveils the human heart and gives you some interest either in Lubin or in Toinette."

* The rendering given above is only intended to link the various speeches into coherence; it has no resemblance with the French. In the original, "Font chatoyer les *mots.*"

"Et quelquefois les *morts,*" dit Monsieur de Clagny.

"Ah! Lousteau! vous vous donnez de ces R-là (airs-là)."

Literally: "And sometimes the dead."—"Ah, are those the airs you assume?"—the play on the insertion of the letter R (*mots, morts*) has no meaning in English.

"For my part, I am alarmed at the progress of public knowledge in the matter of literature," said Bianchon. "Like the Russians, beaten by Charles XII., who at last learned the art of war, the reader has learned the art of writing. Formerly all that was expected of a romance was that it should be interesting. As to style, no one cared for that, not even the author; as to ideas—zero; as to local color—*non est*. By degrees the reader has demanded style, interest, pathos, and complete information; he insists on the five literary senses —Invention, Style, Thought, Learning, and Feeling. Then came criticism commenting on everything. The critic, incapable of inventing anything but calumny, pronounces every work that proceeds from a not perfect brain to be deformed. Some magicians, as Walter Scott, for instance, having appeared in the world, who combined all the five literary senses, such writers as had but one—wit or learning, style or feeling —these cripples, these acephalous, mained or purblind creatures—in a literary sense—have taken to shrieking that all is lost, and have preached a crusade against men who were spoiling the business, or have denounced their works."

"The history of your last literary quarrel!" Dinah observed.

"For pity's sake, come back to the Duke of Bracciano," cried Monsieur de Clagny.

To the despair of all the company, Lousteau went on with the made-up sheet.

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I then wished to make sure of my misfortune that I might be avenged under the protection of Providence and the Law. The Duchess guessed my intentions. We were at war in our purposes before we fought with poison in our hands. We tried to tempt each other to such confidence as we could not feel, I to induce her to drink a potion, she to get posses-

sion of me. She was a woman, and she won the day; for women have a snare more than we men. I fell into it—I was happy; but I awoke next day in this iron cage. All through the day I bellowed with rage in the

darkness of this cellar, over which is the Duchess' bedroom. At night an ingenious counterpoise acting as a lift raised me through the floor, and I saw the Duchess in her lover's arms. She threw me a piece of bread, my daily pittance.

"Thus have I lived for thirty months! From this marble prison my cries can reach no ear. There is no chance for me. I will hope no more. Indeed, the Duchess' room is at the furthest end of the palace, and when I am carried up there none can hear my voice. Each time I see my wife she shows me the

poison I had prepared for her and her lover. I crave it for myself, but she will not let me die; she gives me bread, and I eat it.

"I have done well to eat and live; I had not reckoned on robbers!"

"Yes, Eccellenza, when those fools the honest men are asleep, we are wide awake."

"Oh, Rinaldo, all I possess shall be yours; we will share my treasure like brothers; I would give you everything—even to my Duchy——"

"Eccellenza, procure from the Pope an absolution *in articulo mortis*. It would be of more use to me in my walk of life."

"What you will. Only file through the bars of my cage and lend me your dagger. We have but little time, quick, quick! Oh, if my teeth were but files!—I have tried to eat through this iron."

"Eccellenza," said Rinaldo, "I have already filed through one bar."

"You are a god!"

"Your wife was at the fête given by the Princess Villaviciosa. She brought home her little Frenchman; she is drunk with love.—You have plenty of time."

"Have you done?"

"Yes."

"Your dagger?" said the Duke eagerly to the brigand.

"Here it is."

"Good. I hear the clatter of the spring."

"Do not forget me!" cried the robber, who knew what gratitude was.

"No more than my father," cried the Duke.

"Good-bye!" said Rinaldo. "Lord! How he flies up!" he added to himself as the Duke disappeared.—"No more than his father! If that is all he means to do for me.—And I

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had sworn a vow never to injure a woman!"

But let us leave the robber for a moment to his meditations and go up, like the Duke, to the rooms in the palace.

"Another tailpiece, a Cupid on a snail! And page 230 is blank," said the journalist. "Then there are two more blank pages before we come to the word it is such joy to write when one is unhappily so happy as to be a novelist—*Conclusion!*

CONCLUSION

Never had the Duchess been more lovely; she came from her bath clothed like a goddess, and on seeing

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Adolphe voluptuously reclining on piles of cushions—

"You are beautiful," said she.

"And so are you, Olympia!"

"And you still love me?"

"More and more," said he.

"Ah, none but a Frenchman knows how to love!" cried the Duchess. "Do you love me well to-night?"

"Yes."

"Then come!"

And with an impulse of love and hate—whether it was that Cardinal Borborigano had reminded her of her husband, or that she felt unwonted passion to display, she pressed the springs and held out her arms.

"That is all," said Lousteau, "for the foreman has torn off the rest in wrapping up my proofs. But it is enough to show that the author was full of promise."

"I cannot make head or tail of it," said Gatien Boirouge, who was the first to break the silence of the party from Sancerre.

"Nor I," replied Monsieur Gravier.

"And yet it is a novel of the time of the Empire," said Lousteau.

"By the way in which the brigand is made to speak," said Monsieur Gravier, "it is evident that the author knew nothing of Italy. Banditti do not allow themselves such graceful conceits."

Madame Gorju came up to Bianchon, seeing him pensive, and with a glance towards her daughter Mademoiselle Euphémie Gorju, the owner of a fairly good fortune—"What a rhodomontade!" said she. "The prescriptions you write are worth more than all that rubbish."

The Mayoress had elaborately worked up this speech, which, in her opinion, showed strong judgment.

"Well, madame, we must be lenient, we have but twenty pages out of a thousand," said Bianchon, looking at Mademoiselle Gorju, whose figure threatened terrible things after the birth of her first child.

"Well, Monsieur de Clagny," said Lousteau, "we were talking yesterday of the forms of revenge invented by husbands. What do you say to those invented by wives?"

"I say," replied the Public Prosecutor, "that the romance is not by a Councillor of State, but by a woman. For extravagant inventions the imagination of women far outdoes that of men; witness *Frankenstein* by Mrs. Shelley, *Leone Leoni* by George Sand, the works of Anne Radcliffe, and the *Nouveau Prométhée* (New Prometheus) of Camille de Maupin."

Dinah looked steadily at Monsieur de Clagny, making him feel, by an expression that gave him a chill, that in spite of the illustrious examples he had quoted, she regarded this as a reflection on *Paquita la Sevillane*.

"Pooh!" said little La Baudraye, "the Duke of Bracciano, whom his wife puts into a cage, and to whom she shows herself every night in the arms of her lover, will kill her—and do you call that revenge?—Our laws and our society are far more cruel."

"Why, little La Baudraye is talking!" said Monsieur Boirouge to his wife.

"Why, the woman is left to live on a small allowance, the world turns its back on her, she has no more finery, and no respect paid her—the two things which, in my opinion, are the sum-total of woman," said the little old man.

"But she has happiness!" said Madame de la Baudraye sententiously.

"No," said the master of the house, lighting his candle to go to bed, "for she has a lover."

"For a man who thinks of nothing but his vine-stocks and poles, he has some spunk," said Lousteau.

"Well, he must have something!" replied Bianchon.

Madame de la Baudraye, the only person who could hear Bianchon's remark, laughed so knowingly, and at the same time so bitterly, that the physician could guess the mystery of this woman's life; her premature wrinkles had been puzzling him all day.

But Dinah did not guess, on her part, the ominous prophecy contained for her in her husband's little speech, which her kind old Abbé Duret, if he had been alive, would not have failed to elucidate. Little La Baudraye had detected in Dinah's eyes, when she glanced at the journalist returning the ball of his jests, that swift and luminous flash of tenderness which gilds the gleam of a woman's eye when prudence is cast to the winds, and she is fairly carried away. Dinah paid no more heed to her husband's hint to her to observe the proprieties than Lousteau had done to Dinah's significant warnings on the day of his arrival.

Any other man than Bianchon would have been surprised at Lousteau's immediate success; but he was so much the doctor, that he was not even nettled at Dinah's marked pref-

erence for the newspaper- rather than the prescription-writer! In fact, Dinah, herself famous, was naturally more alive to wit than to fame. Love generally prefers contrast to similitude. Everything was against the physician—his frankness, his simplicity, and his profession. And this is why: Women who want to love—and Dinah wanted to love as much as to be loved—have an instinctive aversion for men who are devoted to an absorbing occupation; in spite of superiority, they are all women in the matter of encroachment. Lousteau, a poet and journalist, and a libertine with a veneer of misanthropy, had that tinsel of the intellect, and led the half-idle life that attracts women. The blunt good sense and keen insight of the really great man weighed upon Dinah, who would not confess her own smallness even to herself. She said in her mind—"The doctor is perhaps the better man, but I do not like him."

Then, again, she reflected on his professional duties, wondering whether a woman could ever be anything but a *subject* to a medical man, who saw so many subjects in the course of a day's work. The first sentence of the aphorism written by Bianchon in her album was a medical observation striking so directly at woman, that Dinah could not fail to be hit by it. And then Bianchon was leaving on the morrow; his practice required his return. What woman, short of having Cupid's mythological dart in her heart, could decide in so short a time?

These little things, which lead to such great catastrophes —having been seen in a mass by Bianchon, he pronounced the verdict he had come to as to Madame de la Baudraye in a few words to Lousteau, to the journalist's great amazement.

While the two friends stood talking together, a storm was gathering in the Sancerre circle, who could not in the least understand Lousteau's paraphrases and commentaries, and who vented it on their hostess. Far from finding in his talk the romance which the Public Prosecutor, the Sous-préfet, the Presiding Judge, and his deputy, Lebas, had

discovered there—to say nothing of Monsieur de la Baudraye and Dinah—the ladies now gathered round the tea-table, took the matter as a practical joke, and accused the Muse of Sancerre of having a finger in it. They had all looked forward to a delightful evening, and had all strained in vain every faculty of their mind. Nothing makes provincial folks so angry as the notion of having been a laughing-stock for Paris folks.

Madame Piédefer left the table to say to her daughter, "Do go and talk to the ladies; they are quite annoyed by your behavior."

Lousteau could not fail to see Dinah's great superiority over the best women of Sancerre; she was better dressed, her movements were graceful, her complexion was exquisitely white by candlelight—in short, she stood out against this background of old faces, shy and ill-dressed girls, like a queen in the midst of her court. Visions of Paris faded from his brain; Lousteau was accepting the provincial surroundings; and while he had too much imagination to remain unimpressed by the royal splendor of this château, the beautiful carvings, and the antique beauty of the rooms, he had also too much experience to overlook the value of the personality which completed this gem of the Renaissance. So by the time the visitors from Sancerre had taken their leave one by one—for they had an hour's drive before them—when no one remained in the drawing-room but Monsieur de Clagny, Monsieur Lebas, Gatien, and Monsieur Gravier, who were all to sleep at Anzy—the journalist had already changed his mind about Dinah. His opinion had gone through the evolution that Madame de la Baudraye had so audaciously prophesied at their first meeting.

"Ah, what things they will say about us on the drive home!" cried the mistress of the house, as she returned to the drawing-room after seeing the Président and the Présidente to their carriage with Madame and Mademoiselle Popinot-Chandier.

The rest of the evening had its pleasant side. In the inti-

macy of a small party each one brought to the conversation his contribution of epigrams on the figure the visitors from Sancerre had cut during Lousteau's comments on the paper wrapped round the proofs.

"My dear fellow," said Bianchon to Lousteau as they went to bed—they had an enormous room with two beds in it—"you will be the happy man of this woman's choice—*née* Piédefer!"

"Do you think so?"

"It is quite natural. You are supposed here to have had many mistresses in Paris; and to a woman there is something indescribably inviting in a man whom other women favor—something attractive and fascinating; is it that she prides herself on being longer remembered than all the rest? that she appeals to his experience, as a sick man will pay more to a famous physician? or that she is flattered by the revival of a world-worn heart?"

"Vanity and the senses count for so much in love affairs," said Lousteau, "that there may be some truth in all those hypotheses. However, if I remain, it will be in consequence of the certificate of innocence, without ignorance, that you have given Dinah. She is handsome, is she not?"

"Love will make her beautiful," said the doctor. "And, after all, she will be a rich widow some day or other! And a child would secure her the life-interest in the Master of La Baudraye's fortune——"

"Why, it is quite an act of virtue to make love to her," said Lousteau, rolling himself up in the bed-clothes, "and to-morrow, with your help—yes, to-morrow, I—well, good-night."

On the following day, Madame de la Baudraye, to whom her husband had six months since given a pair of horses, which he also used in the fields, and an old carriage that rattled on the road, decided that she would take Bianchon so far on his way as Cosne, where he would get into the Lyons diligence as it passed through. She also took her mother and Lousteau, but she intended to drop her mother at La Baudraye

to go on to Cosne with the two Parisians, and return alone with Étienne. She was elegantly dressed, as the journalist at once perceived—bronze kid boots, gray silk stockings, a muslin dress, a green silk scarf with shaded fringe at the ends, and a pretty black lace bonnet with flowers in it. As to Lousteau, the wretch had assumed his war-paint—patent leather boots, trousers of English kerseymere with pleats in front, a very open waistcoat showing a particularly fine shirt and the black brocade waterfall of his handsomest cravat, and a very thin, very short black riding-coat.

Monsieur de Clagny and Monsieur Gravier looked at each other, feeling rather silly as they beheld the two Parisians in the carriage, while they, like two simpletons, were left standing at the foot of the steps. Monsieur de la Baudraye, who stood at the top waving his little hand in a little farewell to the doctor, could not forbear from smiling as he heard Monsieur de Clagny say to Monsieur Gravier:

"You should have escorted them on horseback."

At this juncture, Gatien, riding Monsieur de la Baudraye's quiet little mare, came out of the side road from the stables and joined the party in the chaise.

"Ah, good," said the Receiver-General, "the boy has mounted guard."

"What a bore!" cried Dinah as she saw Gatien. "In thirteen years—for I have been married nearly thirteen years—I have never had three hours' liberty."

"Married, madame?" said the journalist with a smile. "You remind me of a saying of Michaud's—he was so witty! He was setting out for the Holy Land, and his friends were remonstrating with him, urging his age, and the perils of such an expedition. 'And then,' said one, 'you are married.'—'Married!' said he, 'so little married.'"

Even the rigid Madame Piédefer could not repress a smile.

"I should not be surprised to see Monsieur de Clagny mounted on my pony to complete the escort," said Dinah.

"Well, if the Public Prosecutor does not pursue us, you can get rid of this little fellow at Sancerre. Bianchon must,

of course, have left something behind on his table—the notes for the first lecture of his course—and you can ask Gatien to go back to Anzy to fetch it."

This simple little plot put Madame de la Baudraye into high spirits. From the road between Anzy to Sancerre, a glorious landscape frequently comes into view, of the noble stretches of the Loire, looking like a lake, and it was got over very pleasantly, for Dinah was happy in finding herself well understood. Love was discussed in theory, a subject allowing lovers *in petto* to take the measure, as it were, of each other's heart. The journalist took a tone of refined corruption to prove that love obeys no law, that the character of the lovers gives infinite variety to its incidents, that the circumstances of social life add to the multiplicity of its manifestations, that in love all is possible and true, and that any given woman, after resisting every temptation and the seductions of the most passionate lover, may be carried off her feet in the course of a few hours by a fancy, an internal whirlwind of which God alone would ever know the secret!

"Why," said he, "is not that the key to all the adventures we have talked over these three days past?"

For these three days, indeed, Dinah's lively imagination had been full of the most insidious romances, and the conversation of the two Parisians had affected the woman as the most mischievous reading might have done. Lousteau watched the effects of this clever manœuvre, to seize the moment when his prey, whose readiness to be caught was hidden under the abstraction caused by irresolution, should be quite dizzy.

Dinah wished to show La Baudraye to her two visitors, and the farce was duly played out of remembering the papers left by Bianchon in his room at Anzy. Gatien flew off at a gallop to obey his sovereign; Madame Piédefer went to do some shopping in Sancerre; and Dinah went on to Cosne alone with the two friends. Lousteau took his seat by the lady, Bianchon riding backwards. The two friends talked affectionately and with deep compassion for the fate of this choice nature so ill understood and in the midst of such vulgar sur-

roundings. Bianchon served Lousteau well by making fun of the Public Prosecutor, of Monsieur Gravier, and of Gatien; there was a tone of such genuine contempt in his remarks, that Madame de la Baudraye dared not take the part of her adorers.

"I perfectly understand the position you have maintained," said the doctor as they crossed the Loire. "You were inaccessible excepting to that brain-love which often leads to heart-love; and not one of those men, it is very certain, is capable of disguising what, at an early stage of life, is disgusting to the senses in the eyes of a refined woman. To you, now, love is indispensable."

"Indispensable!" cried Dinah, looking curiously at the doctor. "Do you mean that you prescribe love to me?"

"If you go on living as you live now, in three years you will be hideous," replied Bianchon in a dictatorial tone.

"Monsieur!" said Madame de la Baudraye, almost frightened.

"Forgive my friend," said Lousteau, half jestingly. "He is always the medical man, and to him love is merely a question of hygiene. But he is quite disinterested—it is for your sake only that he speaks—as is evident, since he is starting in an hour——"

At Cosne a little crowd gathered round the old repainted chaise, with the arms on the panels granted by Louis XIV. to the new La Baudraye. Gules, a pair of scales or; on a chief azure (color on color) three cross-crosslets argent. For supporters two greyhounds argent, collared azure, chained or. The ironical motto, *Deo sic patet fides et hominibus,* had been inflicted on the converted Calvinist by Hozier the satirical.

"Let us get out; they will come and find us," said the Baroness, desiring her coachman to keep watch.

Dinah took Bianchon's arm, and the doctor set off by the banks of the Loire at so rapid a pace that the journalist had to linger behind. The physician had explained by a single wink that he meant to do Lousteau a good turn.

"You have been attracted by Étienne," said Bianchon to

Dinah; "he has appealed strongly to your imagination; last night we were talking about you.—He loves you. But he is frivolous, and difficult to hold; his poverty compels him to live in Paris, while everything condemns you to live at Sancerre. —Take a lofty view of life. Make Lousteau your friend; do not ask too much of him; he will come three times a year to spend a few days with you, and you will owe to him your beauty, happiness, and fortune. Monsieur de la Baudraye may live to be a hundred; but he might die in a few days if he should leave off the flannel winding-sheet in which he swathes himself. So run no risks, be prudent both of you.—Say not a word—I have read your heart."

Madame de la Baudraye was defenceless under this serried attack, and in the presence of a man who spoke at once as a doctor, a confessor, and confidential friend.

"Indeed!" said she. "Can you suppose that any woman would care to compete with a journalist's mistresses?—Monsieur Lousteau strikes me as agreeable and witty; but he is *blasé*, etc., etc.——"

Dinah had turned back, and was obliged to check the flow of words by which she tried to disguise her intentions; for Étienne, who seemed to be studying progress in Cosne, was coming to meet them.

"Believe me," said Bianchon, "what he wants is to be truly loved; and if he alters his course of life, it will be to the benefit of his talent."

Dinah's coachman hurried up breathlessly to say that the diligence had come in, and they walked on quickly, Madame de la Baudraye between the two men.

"Good-bye, my children!" said Bianchon, before they got into the town, "you have my blessing!"

He released Madame de la Baudraye's hand from his arm, and allowed Lousteau to draw it into his, with a tender look, as he pressed it to his heart. What a difference to Dinah! Étienne's arm thrilled her deeply. Bianchon's had not stirred her in the least. She and the journalist exchanged one of those glowing looks that are more than an avowal.

"Only provincial women wear muslin gowns in these days," thought Lousteau to himself, "the only stuff which shows every crease. This woman, who has chosen me for her lover, will make a fuss over her frock! If she had but put on a foulard skirt, I should be happy.—What is the meaning of these difficulties——"

While Lousteau was wondering whether Dinah had put on a muslin gown on purpose to protect herself by an insuperable obstacle, Bianchon, with the help of the coachman, was seeing his luggage piled on the diligence. Finally, he came to take leave of Dinah, who was excessively friendly with him.

"Go home, Madame la Baronne, leave me here—Gatien will be coming," he added in an undertone. "It is getting late," said he aloud. "Good-bye!"

"Good-bye—great man!" cried Lousteau, shaking hands with Bianchon.

When the journalist and Madame de la Baudraye, side by side in the rickety old chaise, had recrossed the Loire, they both were unready to speak. In these circumstances, the first words that break the silence are full of terrible meaning.

"Do you know how much I love you?" said the journalist point blank.

Victory might gratify Lousteau, but defeat could cause him no grief. This indifference was the secret of his audacity. He took Madame de la Baudraye's hand as he spoke these decisive words, and pressed it in both his; but Dinah gently released it.

"Yes, I am as good as an actress or a *grisette,*" she said in a voice that trembled, though she spoke lightly. "But can you suppose that a woman who, in spite of her absurdities, has some intelligence, will have reserved the best treasures of her heart for a man who will regard her merely as a transient pleasure?—I am not surprised to hear from your lips the words which so many men have said to me—but——"

The coachman turned round.

"Here comes Monsieur Gatien," said he.

"I love you, I will have you, you shall be mine, for I have never felt for any woman the passion I have for you!" said Lousteau in her ear.

"In spite of my will, perhaps?" said she, with a smile.

"At least you must seem to have been assaulted to save my honor," said the Parisian, to whom the fatal immaculateness of clean muslin suggested a ridiculous notion.

Before Gatien had reached the end of the bridge, the outrageous journalist had crumpled up Madame de la Baudraye's muslin dress to such effect that she was absolutely not presentable.

"Oh, monsieur!" she exclaimed in dignified reproof.

"You defied me," said the Parisian.

But Gatien now rode up with the vehemence of a duped lover. To regain a little of Madame de la Baudraye's esteem, Lousteau did his best to hide the tumbled dress from Gatien's eyes by leaning out of the chaise to speak to him from Dinah's side.

"Go back to our inn," said he, "there is still time; the diligence does not start for half an hour. The papers are on the table of the room Bianchon was in; he wants them particularly, for he will be lost without his notes for the lecture."

"Pray go, Gatien," said Dinah to her young adorer, with an imperious glance. And the boy thus commanded turned his horse and was off with a loose rein.

"Go quickly to La Baudraye," cried Lousteau to the coachman. "Madame is not well—Your mother only will know the secret of my trick," added he, taking his seat by Dinah.

"You call such infamous conduct a trick?" cried Madame de la Baudraye, swallowing down a few tears that dried up with the fire of outraged pride.

She leaned back in the corner of the chaise, crossed her arms, and gazed out at the Loire and the landscape, at anything rather than at Lousteau. The journalist put on his most ingratiating tone, and talked till they reached La Baudraye, where Dinah fled indoors, trying not to be seen by any

one. In her agitation she threw herself on a sofa and burst into tears.

"If I am an object of horror to you, of aversion or scorn, I will go," said Lousteau, who had followed her. And he threw himself at her feet.

It was at this crisis that Madame Piédefer came in, saying to her daughter:

"What is the matter? What has happened?"

"Give your daughter another dress at once," said the audacious Parisian in the prim old lady's ear.

Hearing the mad gallop of Gatien's horse, Madame de la Baudraye fled to her bedroom, followed by her mother.

"There are no papers at the inn," said Gatien to Lousteau, who went out to meet him.

"And you found none at the Château d'Anzy either?" replied Lousteau.

"You have been making a fool of me," said Gatien, in a cold, set voice.

"Quite so," replied Lousteau. "Madame de la Baudraye was greatly annoyed by your choosing to follow her without being invited. Believe me, to bore a woman is a bad way of courting her. Dinah has played you a trick, and you have given her a laugh; it is more than any of you has done in these thirteen years past. You owe that success to Bianchon, for your cousin was the author of the Farce of the 'Manuscript.' —Will the horse get over it?" asked Lousteau with a laugh, while Gatien was wondering whether to be angry or not.

"The horse!" said Gatien.

At this moment Madame de la Baudraye came in, dressed in a velvet gown, and accompanied by her mother, who shot angry flashes at Lousteau. It would have been too rash for Dinah to seem cold or severe to Lousteau in Gatien's presence; and Étienne, taking advantage of this, offered his arm to the supposed Lucretia; however, she declined it.

"Do you mean to cast off a man who has vowed to live for you?" said he, walking close beside her. "I shall stop at Sancerre and go home to-morrow."

"Are you coming, mamma?" said Madame de la Baudraye to Madame Piédefer, thus avoiding a reply to the direct challenge by which Lousteau was forcing her to a decision.

Lousteau handed the mother into the chaise, he helped Madame de la Baudraye by gently taking her arm, and he and Gatien took the front seat, leaving the saddle horse at La Baudraye.

"You have changed your gown," said Gatien, blunderingly, to Dinah.

"Madame la Baronne was chilled by the cool air off the river," replied Lousteau. "Bianchon advised her to put on a warm dress."

Dinah turned as red as a poppy, and Madame Piédefer assumed a stern expression.

"Poor Bianchon! he is on the road to Paris. A noble soul!" said Lousteau.

"Oh, yes!" cried Madame de la Baudraye, "he is high-minded, full of delicate feeling——"

"We were in such good spirits when we set out," said Lousteau; "now you are overdone, and you speak to me so bitterly —why? Are you not accustomed to being told how handsome and how clever you are? For my part, I say boldly, before Gatien, I give up Paris; I mean to stay at Sancerre and swell the number of your *cavalieri serventi.* I feel so young again in my native district; I have quite forgotten Paris and all its wickedness, and its bores, and its wearisome pleasures.—Yes, my life seems in a way purified."

Dinah allowed Lousteau to talk without even looking at him; but at last there was a moment when this serpent's rhodomontade was really so inspired by the effort he made to affect passion in phrases and ideas of which the meaning, though hidden from Gatien, found a loud response in Dinah's heart, that she raised her eyes to his. This look seemed to crown Lousteau's joy; his wit flowed more freely, and at last he made Madame de la Baudraye laugh. When, under circumstances which so seriously compromise her pride, a woman has been made to laugh, she is finally committed.

As they drove in by the spacious graveled forecourt, with its lawn in the middle, and the large vases filled with flowers which so well set off the façade of Anzy, the journalist was saying:

"When women love, they forgive everything, even our crimes; when they do not love, they cannot forgive anything —not even our virtues.—Do you forgive me," he added in Madame de la Baudraye's ear, and pressing her arm to his heart with tender emphasis. And Dinah could not help smiling.

All through dinner, and for the rest of the evening, Étienne was in the most delightful spirits, inexhaustibly cheerful; but while thus giving vent to his intoxication, he now and then fell into the dreamy abstraction of a man who seems rapt in his own happiness.

After coffee had been served, Madame de la Baudraye and her mother left the men to wander about the gardens. Monsieur Gravier then remarked to Monsieur de Clagny:

"Did you observe that Madame de la Baudraye, after going out in a muslin gown came home in a velvet?"

"As she got into the carriage at Cosne, the muslin dress caught on a brass nail and was torn all the way down," replied Lousteau.

"Oh!" exclaimed Gatien, stricken to the heart by hearing two such different explanations.

The journalist, who understood, took Gatien by the arm and pressed it as a hint to him to be silent. A few minutes later Étienne left Dinah's three adorers and took possession of little La Baudraye. Then Gatien was cross-questioned as to the events of the day. Monsieur Gravier and Monsieur de Clagny were dismayed to hear that on the return from Cosne Lousteau had been alone with Dinah, and even more so on hearing the two versions explaining the lady's change of dress. And the three discomfited gentlemen were in a very awkward position for the rest of the evening.

Next day each, on various business, was obliged to leave Anzy; Dinah remained with her mother, Lousteau, and her

husband. The annoyance vented by the three victims gave rise to an organized rebellion in Sancerre. The surrender of the Muse of Le Berry, of the Nivernais, and of Morvan was the cause of a perfect hue and cry of slander, evil report, and various guesses in which the story of the muslin gown held a prominent place. No dress Dinah had ever worn had been so much commented on, or was half as interesting to the girls, who could not conceive what the connection might be, that made the married women laugh, between love and a muslin gown.

The Présidente Boirouge, furious at her son's discomfiture, forgot the praise she had lavished on the poem of *Paquita*, and fulminated terrific condemnation on the woman who could publish such a disgraceful work.

"The wretched woman commits every crime she writes about," said she. "Perhaps she will come to the same end as her heroine!"

Dinah's fate among the good folks of Sancerre was like that of Maréchal Soult in the opposition newspapers; as long as he is Minister he lost the battle of Toulouse; whenever he is out of the Government he won it! While she was virtuous, Dinah was a match for Camille de Maupin, a rival of the most famous women; but as soon as she was happy, she was an *unhappy creature*.

Monsieur de Clagny was her valiant champion; he went several times to the Château d'Anzy to acquire the right to contradict the rumors current as to the woman he still faithfully adored, even in her fall; and he maintained that she and Lousteau were engaged together on some great work. But the lawyer was laughed to scorn.

The month of October was lovely; autumn is the finest season in the valley of the Loire; but in 1836 it was unusually glorious. Nature seemed to aid and abet Dinah, who, as Bianchon had predicted, gradually developed a heart-felt passion. In one month she was an altered woman. She was surprised to find in herself so many inert and dormant qualities, hitherto in abeyance. To her Lousteau seemed an angel;

for heart-love, the crowning need of a great nature, had made a new woman of her. Dinah was alive! She had found an outlet for her powers, she saw undreamed-of vistas in the future—in short, she was happy, happy without alarms or hindrances. The vast castle, the gardens, the park, the forest, favored love.

Lousteau found in Madame de la Baudraye an artlessness, nay, if you will, an innocence of mind which made her very original; there was much more of the unexpected and winning in her than in a girl. Lousteau was quite alive to a form of flattery which in most women is assumed, but which in Dinah was genuine; she really learned from him the ways of love; he really was the first to reign in her heart. And, indeed, he took the trouble to be exceedingly amiable.

Men, like women, have a stock in hand of recitatives, of *cantabile,* of *nocturnes,* airs and refrains—shall we say of recipes, although we speak of love—which each one believes to be exclusively his own. Men who have reached Lousteau's age try to distribute the "movements" of this répertoire through the whole opera of a passion. Lousteau, regarding this adventure with Dinah as a mere temporary connection, was eager to stamp himself on her memory in indelible lines; and during that beautiful October he was prodigal of his most entrancing melodies and most elaborate *barcarolles.* In fact, he exhausted every resource of the stage management of love, to use an expression borrowed from the theatrical dictionary, and admirably descriptive of his manœuvres.

"If that woman ever forgets me!" he would sometimes say to himself as they returned together from a long walk in the woods, "I will owe her no grudge—she will have found something better."

When two beings have sung together all the duets of that enchanting score, and still love each other, it may be said that they love truly.

Lousteau, however, had not time to repeat himself, for he was to leave Anzy in the early days of November. His paper required his presence in Paris. Before breakfast, on the day

before he was to leave, the journalist and Dinah saw the master of the house come in with an artist from Nevers, who restored carvings of all kinds.

"What are you going to do?" asked Lousteau. "What is to be done to the château?"

"This is what I am going to do," said the little man, leading Lousteau, the local artist, and Dinah out on the terrace.

He pointed out, on the front of the building, a shield supported by two sirens, not unlike that which may be seen on the arcade, now closed, through which there used to be a passage from the Quai des Tuileries to the courtyard of the old Louvre, and over which the words may still be seen, *"Bibliothèque du Cabinet du Roi."* This shield bore the arms of the noble House of Uxelles, namely, Or and gules party per fess, with two lions or, dexter and sinister as supporters. Above, a knight's helm, mantled of the tincture of the shield, and surmounted by a ducal coronet. Motto, *Cy paroist!* A proud and sonorous device.

"I want to put my own coat of arms in the place of that of the Uxelles; and as they are repeated six times on the two fronts and the two wings, it is not a trifling affair."

"Your arms, so new, and since 1830!" exclaimed Dinah.

"Have I not created an entail?"

"I could understand it if you had children," said the journalist.

"Oh!" said the old man, "Madame de la Baudraye is still young; there is no time lost."

This allusion made Lousteau smile; he did not understand Monsieur de la Baudraye.

"There, Didine!" said he in Dinah's ear, "what a waste of remorse!"

Dinah begged him to give her one day more, and the lovers parted after the manner of certain theatres, which give ten last performances of a piece that is paying. And how many promises they made! How many solemn pledges did not Dinah exact and the unblushing journalist give her!

Dinah, with the superiority of the Superior Woman, ac-

companied Lousteau, in the face of all the world, as far as Cosne, with her mother and little La Baudraye. When, ten days later, Madame de la Baudraye saw in her drawing-room at La Baudraye, Monsieur de Clagny, Gatien, and Gravier, she found an opportunity of saying to each in turn:

"I owe it to Monsieur Lousteau that I discovered that I had not been loved for my own sake."

And what noble speeches she uttered, on man, on the nature of his feelings, on the end of his base passions, and so forth. Of Dinah's three worshipers, Monsieur de Clagny only said to her: "I love you, come what may"—and Dinah accepted him as her confidant, lavished on him all the marks of friendship which women can devise for the Gurths who are ready thus to wear the collar of gilded slavery.

In Paris once more, Lousteau had, in a few weeks, lost the impression of the happy time he had spent at the Château d'Anzy. This is why: Lousteau lived by his pen.

In this century, especially since the triumph of the *bourgeoisie*—the commonplace, money-saving citizen—who takes good care not to imitate Francis I. or Louis XIV.—to live by the pen is a form of penal servitude to which a galley-slave would prefer death. To live by the pen means to create—to create to-day, and to-morrow, and incessantly—or to seem to create; and the imitation costs as dear as the reality. So, besides his daily contribution to a newspaper, which was like the stone of Sisyphus, and which came every Monday, crashing down on to the feather of his pen, Étienne worked for three or four literary magazines. Still, do not be alarmed; he put no artistic conscientiousness into his work. This man of Sancerre had a facility, a carelessness, if you call it so, which ranked him with those writers who are mere scriveners, literary hacks. In Paris, in our day, hack-work cuts a man off from every pretension to a literary position. When he can do no more, or no longer cares for advancement, the man who can write becomes a journalist and a hack.

The life he leads is not unpleasing. Blue-stockings, begin-

ners in every walk of life, actresses at the outset or the close of a career, publishers and authors, all make much of these writers of the ready pen. Lousteau, a thorough man about town, lived at scarcely any expense beyond paying his rent. He had boxes at all the theatres; the sale of the books he reviewed or left unreviewed paid for his gloves; and he would say to those authors who published at their own expense, "I have your book always in my hands!" He took toll from vanity in the form of drawings or pictures. Every day had its engagements to dinner, every night its theatre, every morning was filled up with callers, visits, and lounging. His serial in the paper, two novels a year for weekly magazines, and his miscellaneous article were the tax he paid for this easy-going life. And yet, to reach this position, Étienne had struggled for ten years.

At the present time, known to the literary world, liked for the good or the mischief he did with equally facile good humor, he let himself float with the stream, never caring for the future. He ruled a little set of newcomers, he had friendships—or rather, habits of fifteen years' standing, and men with whom he supped, and dined, and indulged his wit. He earned from seven to eight hundred francs a month, a sum which he found quite insufficient for the prodigality peculiar to the impecunious. Indeed, Lousteau found himself now just as hard up as when, on first appearing in Paris, he had said to himself, "If I had but five hundred francs a month, I should be rich!"

The cause of this phenomenon was as follows: Lousteau lived in the Rue des Martyrs in pretty ground-floor rooms with a garden, and splendidly furnished. When he settled there in 1833 he had come to an agreement with an upholsterer that kept his pocket money low for a long time. These rooms were let for twelve hundred francs. The months of January, April, July, and October were, as he phrased it, his indigent months. The rent and the porter's account cleaned him out. Lousteau took no fewer hackney cabs, spent a hundred francs in breakfasts all the same, smoked thirty francs' worth of

cigars, and could never refuse the mistress of a day a dinner or a new dress. He thus dipped so deeply into the fluctuating earnings of the following months, that he could no more find a hundred francs on his chimney-piece now, when he was making seven or eight hundred francs a month, than he could in 1822, when he was hardly getting two hundred.

Tired, sometimes, by the incessant vicissitudes of a literary life, and as much bored by amusement as a courtesan, Lousteau would get out of the tideway and sit on the bank, and say to one and another of his intimate allies—Nathan or Bixiou, as they sat smoking in his scrap of garden, looking out on an evergreen lawn as big as a dinner-table:

"What will be the end of us? White hairs are giving us respectful hints!"

"Lord! we shall marry when we choose to give as much thought to the matter as we give to a drama or a novel," said Nathan.

"And Florine?" retorted Bixiou.

"Oh, we all have a Florine," said Étienne, flinging away the end of his cigar and thinking of Madame Schontz.

Madame Schontz was a pretty enough woman to put a very high price on the interest on her beauty, while reserving absolute ownership for Lousteau, the man of her heart. Like all those women who get the name in Paris of *Lorettes*, from the Church of Notre Dame de Lorette, round about which they dwell, she lived in the Rue Fléchier, a stone's throw from Lousteau. This lady took a pride and delight in teasing her friends by boasting of having a Wit for her lover.

These details of Lousteau's life and fortune are indispensable, for this penury and this bohemian existence of a man to whom Parisian luxury had become a necessity, were fated to have a cruel influence on Dinah's life. Those to whom the bohemia of Paris is familiar will now understand how it was that, by the end of a fortnight, the journalist, up to his ears in the literary environment, could laugh about his Baroness with his friends and even with Madame Schontz. To such readers as regard such doings as utterly mean, it is almost useless to make excuses which they will not accept.

"What did you do at Sancerre?" asked Bixiou the first time he met Lousteau.

"I did good service to three worthy provincials—a Receiver-General of Taxes, a little cousin of his, and a Public Prosecutor, who for ten years had been dancing round and round one of the hundred 'Tenth Muses' who adorn the Departments," said he. "But they had no more dared to touch her than we touch a decorated cream at dessert till some strong-minded person has made a hole in it."

"Poor boy!" said Bixiou. "I said you had gone to Sancerre to turn Pegasus out to grass."

"Your joke is as stupid as my Muse is handsome," retorted Lousteau. "Ask Bianchon, my dear fellow."

"A Muse and a Poet! A homœopathic cure then!" said Bixiou.

On the tenth day Lousteau received a letter with the Sancerre post-mark.

"Good! very good!" said Lousteau.

"'Beloved friend, idol of my heart and soul——' twenty pages of it! all at one sitting, and dated midnight! She writes when she finds herself alone. Poor woman! Ah, ha! And a postscript—

"'I dare not ask you to write to me as I write, every day; still, I hope to have a few lines from my dear one every week, to relieve my mind.'—What a pity to burn it all! it is really well written," said Lousteau to himself, as he threw the ten sheets of paper into the fire after having read them. "That woman was born to reel off copy!"

Lousteau was not much afraid of Madame Schontz, who really loved him for himself; but he had supplanted a friend in the heart of a Marquise. This Marquise, a lady nowise coy, sometimes dropped in unexpectedly at his rooms in the evening, arriving veiled in a hackney coach; and she, as a literary woman, allowed herself to hunt through all his drawers.

A week later, Lousteau, who hardly remembered Dinah, was startled by another budget from Sancerre—eight leaves, sixteen pages! He heard a woman's step; he thought it an-

nounced a search from the Marquise, and tossed these rapturous and entrancing proofs of affection into the fire—unread!

"A woman's letter!" exclaimed Madame Schontz, as she came in. "The paper, the wax, are scented——"

"Here you are, sir," said a porter from the coach office, setting down two huge hampers in the ante-room. "Carriage paid. Please to sign my book."

"Carriage paid!" cried Madame Schontz. "It must have come from Sancerre."

"Yes, madame," said the porter.

"Your Tenth Muse is a remarkably intelligent woman," said the courtesan, opening one of the hampers, while Lousteau was writing his name. "I like a Muse who understands housekeeping, and who can make game pies as well as blots. And, oh! what beautiful flowers!" she went on, opening the second hamper. "Why, you could get none finer in Paris!—And here, and here! A hare, partridges, half a roebuck! —We will ask your friends and have a famous dinner, for Athalie has a special talent for dressing venison."

Lousteau wrote to Dinah; but instead of writing from the heart, he was clever. The letter was all the more insidious; it was like one of Mirabeau's letters to Sophie. The style of a true lover is transparent. It is a clear stream which allows the bottom of the heart to be seen between two banks, bright with the trifles of existence, and covered with the flowers of the soul that blossom afresh every day, full of intoxicating beauty—but only for two beings. As soon as a love letter has any charm for a third reader, it is beyond doubt the product of the head, not of the heart. But a woman will always be beguiled; she always believes herself to be the determining cause of this flow of wit.

By the end of December Lousteau had ceased to read Dinah's letters; they lay in a heap in a drawer of his chest that was never locked, under his shirts, which they scented.

Then one of those chances came to Lousteau which such bohemians ought to clutch by every hair. In the middle of December, Madame Schontz, who took a real interest in

Étienne, sent to beg him to call on her one morning on business.

"My dear fellow, you have a chance of marrying."

"I can marry very often, happily, my dear."

"When I say marrying, I mean marrying well. You have no prejudices: I need not mince matters. This is the position: A young lady has got into trouble; her mother knows nothing of even a kiss. Her father is an honest notary, a man of honor; he has been wise enough to keep it dark. He wants to get his daughter married within a fortnight, and he will give her a fortune of a hundred and fifty thousand francs —for he has three other children; but—and it is not a bad idea—he will add a hundred thousand francs, under the rose, hand to hand, to cover the damages. They are an old family of Paris citizens, Rue des Lombards——"

"Well, then, why does not the lover marry her?"

"Dead."

"What a romance! Such things are nowhere to be heard of but in the Rue des Lombards."

"But do not take it into your head that a jealous brother murdered the seducer. The young man died in the most commonplace way of a pleurisy caught as he came out of the theatre. A head-clerk and penniless, the man entrapped the daughter in order to marry into the business.—A judgment from heaven, I call it!"

"Where did you hear the story?"

"From Malaga; the notary is her *milord.*"

"What, Cardot, the son of that little old man in hair-powder, Florentine's first friend?"

"Just so. Malaga, whose 'fancy' is a little tomtit of a fiddler of eighteen, cannot in conscience make such a boy marry the girl. Besides, she has no cause to do him an ill turn.—Indeed, Monsieur Cardot wants a man of thirty at least. Our notary, I feel sure, will be proud to have a famous man for his son-in-law. So just feel yourself all over.—You will pay your debts, you will have twelve thousand francs a year, and be a father without any trouble on your part; what

do you say to that to the good? And, after all, you only marry a very consolable widow. There is an income of fifty thousand francs in the house, and the value of the connection, so in due time you may look forward to not less than fifteen thousand francs a year more for your share, and you will enter a family holding a fine political position; Cardot is the brother-in-law of old Camusot, the député who lived so long with Fanny Beaupré."

"Yes," said Lousteau, "old Camusot married little Daddy Cardot's eldest daughter, and they had high times together!"

"Well!" Madame Schontz went on, "and Madame Cardot, the notary's wife, was a Chiffreville—manufacturers of chemical products, the aristocracy of these days! Potash, I tell you! Still, this is the unpleasant side of the matter. You will have a terrible mother-in-law, a woman capable of killing her daughter if she knew——! This Cardot woman is a bigot; she has lips like two faded narrow pink ribbons.

"A man of the town like you would never pass muster with that woman, who, in her well-meaning way, will spy out your bachelor life and know every fact of the past. However, Cardot says he means to exert his paternal authority. The poor man will be obliged to do the civil to his wife for some days; a woman made of wood, my dear fellow; Malaga, who has seen her, calls her a penitential scrubber. Cardot is a man of forty; he will be mayor of his district, and perhaps be elected deputy. He is prepared to give in lieu of the hundred thousand francs a nice little house in the Rue Saint-Lazare, with a forecourt and a garden, which cost him no more than sixty thousand at the time of the July overthrow; he would sell, and that would be an opportunity for you to go and come at the house, to see the daughter, and be civil to the mother.—And it would give you a look of property in Madame Cardot's eyes. You would be housed like a prince in that little mansion. Then, by Camusot's interest, you may get an appointment as librarian to some public office where there is no library.—Well, and then if you invest your money in backing up a newspaper, you will get ten thousand

francs a year on it, you can earn six, your librarianship will bring you in four.—Can you do better for yourself?

"If you were to marry a lamb without spot, it might be a light woman by the end of two years. What is the damage? —an anticipated dividend! It is quite the fashion.

"Take my word for it, you can do no better than come to dine with Malaga to-morrow. You will meet your father-in-law; he will know the secret has been let out—by Malaga, with whom he cannot be angry—and then you are master of the situation. As to your wife!—Why, her misconduct leaves you as free as a bachelor——"

"Your language is as blunt as a cannon ball."

"I love you for your own sake, that is all—and I can reason. Well! why do you stand there like a wax image of Abd-el-Kader? There is nothing to meditate over. Marriage is heads or tails—well, you have tossed heads up."

"You shall have my reply to-morrow," said Lousteau.

"I would sooner have it at once; Malaga will write you up to-night."

"Well, then, yes."

Lousteau spent the evening in writing a long letter to the Marquise, giving her the reasons which compelled him to marry: his constant poverty, the torpor of his imagination, his white hairs, his moral and physical exhaustion—in short, four pages of arguments.—"As to Dinah, I will send her a circular announcing the marriage," said he to himself. "As Bixiou says, I have not my match for knowing how to dock the tail of a passion."

Lousteau, who at first had been on some ceremony with himself, by next day had come to the point of dreading lest the marriage should not come off. He was pressingly civil to the notary.

"I knew monsieur your father," said he, "at Florentine's, so I may well know you here, at Mademoiselle Turquet's. Like father, like son. A very good fellow and a philosopher, was little Daddy Cardot—excuse me, we always called him so. At that time, Florine, Florentine, Tullia, Coralie, and

Mariette were the five fingers of your hand, so to speak—it is fifteen years ago. My follies, as you may suppose, are a thing of the past.—In those days it was pleasure that ran away with me; now I am ambitious; but, in our day, to get on at all a man must be free from debt, have a good income, a wife, and a family. If I pay taxes enough to qualify me, I may be a deputy yet, like any other man."

Maître Cardot appreciated this profession of faith. Lousteau had laid himself out to please, and the notary liked him, feeling himself more at his ease, as may be easily imagined, with a man who had known his father's secrets than he would have been with another. On the following day Lousteau was introduced to the Cardot family as the purchaser of the house in the Rue Saint-Lazare, and three days later he dined there.

Cardot lived in an old house near the Place du Châtelet. In this house everything was "good." Economy covered every scrap of gilding with green gauze; all the furniture wore holland covers. Though it was impossible to feel a shade of uneasiness as to the wealth of the inhabitants, at the end of half an hour no one could suppress a yawn. Boredom perched in every nook; the curtains hung dolefully; the dining-room was like Harpagon's. Even if Lousteau had not known all about Malaga, he could have guessed that the notary's real life was spent elsewhere.

The journalist saw a tall, fair girl with blue eyes, at once shy and languishing. The elder brother took a fancy to him; he was the fourth clerk in the office, but strongly attracted by the snares of literary fame, though destined to succeed his father. The younger sister was twelve years old. Lousteau, assuming a little Jesuitical air, played the Monarchist and Churchman for the benefit of the mother, was quite smooth, deliberate, and complimentary.

Within three weeks of their introduction, at his fourth dinner there, Félicie Cardot, who had been watching Lousteau out of the corner of her eye, carried him a cup of coffee where he stood in the window recess, and said in a low voice, with tears in her eyes:

"I will devote my whole life, monsieur, to thanking you for your sacrifice in favor of a poor girl——"

Lousteau was touched; there was so much expression in her look, her accent, her attitude. "She would make a good man happy," thought he, pressing her hand in reply.

Madame Cardot looked upon her son-in-law as a man with a future before him; but, above all the fine qualities she ascribed to him, she was most delighted by his high tone of morals. Étienne, prompted by the wily notary, had pledged his word that he had no natural children, no tie that could endanger the happiness of her dear Félicie.

"You may perhaps think I go rather too far," said the bigot to the journalist; "but in giving such a jewel as my Félicie to any man, one must think of the future. I am not one of those mothers who want to be rid of their daughters. Monsieur Cardot hurries matters on, urges forward his daughter's marriage; he wishes it over. This is the only point on which we differ.—Though with a man like you, monsieur, a literary man whose youth has been preserved by hard work from the moral shipwreck now so prevalent, we may feel quite safe; still, you would be the first to laugh at me if I looked for a husband for my daughter with my eyes shut. I know you are not an innocent, and I should be very sorry for my Félicie if you were" (this was said in a whisper); "but if you had any *liaison*—For instance, monsieur, you have heard of Madame Roguin, the wife of a notary who, unhappily for our faculty, was sadly notorious. Madame Roguin has, ever since 1820, been kept by a banker——"

"Yes, du Tillet," replied Étienne; but he bit his tongue as he recollected how rash it was to confess to an acquaintance with du Tillet.

"Yes.—Well, monsieur, if you were a mother, would you not quake at the thought that Madame du Tillet's fate might be your child's? At her age, and *née* de Granville! To have as a rival a woman of fifty and more. Sooner would I see my daughter dead than give her to a man who had such a connection with a married woman. A grisette, an actress,

you take her and leave her.—There is no danger, in my opinion, from women of that stamp; love is their trade, they care for no one, one down and another to come on!—But a woman who has sinned against duty must hug her sin, her only excuse is constancy, if such a crime can ever have an excuse. At least, that is the view I hold of a respectable woman's fall, and that is what makes it so terrible——"

Instead of looking for the meaning of these speeches, Étienne made a jest of them at Malaga's, whither he went with his father-in-law elect; for the notary and the journalist were the best of friends.

Lousteau had already given himself the airs of a person of importance; his life at last was to have a purpose; he was in luck's way, and in a few days would be the owner of a delightful little house in the Rue Saint-Lazare; he was going to be married to a charming woman, he would have about twenty thousand francs a year, and could give the reins to his ambition; the young lady loved him, and he would be connected with several respectable families. In short, he was in full sail on the blue waters of hope.

Madame Cardot had expressed a wish to see the prints for *Gil Blas*, one of the illustrated volumes which the French publishers were at that time bringing out, and Lousteau had taken the first numbers for the lady's inspection. The lawyer's wife had a scheme of her own, she had borrowed the book merely to return it; she wanted an excuse for walking in on her future son-in-law quite unexpectedly. The sight of those bachelor rooms, which her husband had described as charming, would tell her more, she thought, as to Lousteau's habits of life than any information she could pick up. Her sister-in-law, Madame Camusot, who knew nothing of the fateful secret, was terrified at such a marriage for her niece. Monsieur Camusot, a Councillor of the Supreme Court, old Camusot's son by his first marriage, had given his stepmother, who was Cardot's sister, a far from flattering account of the journalist.

Lousteau, clever as he was, did not think it strange that the wife of a rich notary should wish to inspect a volume costing fifteen francs before deciding on the purchase. Your clever man never condescends to study the middle-class, who escape his ken by this want of attention; and while he is making game of them, they are at leisure to throttle him.

So one day early in January 1837, Madame Cardot and her daughter took a hackney coach and went to the Rue des Martyrs to return the parts of *Gil Blas* to Félicie's betrothed, both delighted at the thought of seeing Lousteau's rooms. These domiciliary visitations are not unusual in the old citizen class. The porter at the front gate was not in; but his daughter, on being informed by the worthy lady that she was in the presence of Monsieur Lousteau's future mother-in-law and bride, handed over the key of the apartment—all the more readily because Madame Cardot placed a gold piece in her hand.

It was by this time about noon, the hour at which the journalist would return from breakfasting at the Café Anglais. As he crossed the open space between the Church of Notre-Dame de Lorette and the Rue des Martyrs, Lousteau happened to look at a hired coach that was toiling up the Rue du Faubourg-Montmartre, and he fancied it was a dream when he saw the face of Dinah! He stood frozen to the spot when, on reaching his house, he beheld his Didine at the coach door.

"What has brought you here?" he inquired.—He adopted the familiar *tu*. The formality of *vous* was out of the question to a woman he must get rid of.

"Why, my love," cried she, "have you not read my letters?"

"Certainly I have," said Lousteau.

"Well, then?"

"Well, then?"

"You are a father," replied the country lady.

"Faugh!" cried he, disregarding the barbarity of such an exclamation. "Well," thought he to himself, "she must be prepared for the blow."

He signed to the coachman to wait, gave his hand to Ma-

dame de la Baudraye, and left the man with the chaise full of trunks, vowing that he would send away *illico,* as he said to himself, the woman and her luggage, back to the place she had come from.

"Monsieur, monsieur," called out little Pamela.

The child had some sense, and felt that three women must not be allowed to meet in a bachelor's rooms.

"Well, well!" said Lousteau, dragging Dinah along.

Pamela concluded that the lady must be some relation; however, she added:

"The key is in the door; your mother-in-law is there."

In his agitation, while Madame de la Baudraye was pouring out a flood of words, Étienne understood the child to say, "Mother is there," the only circumstance that suggested itself as possible, and he went in.

Félicie and her mother, who were by this time in the bedroom, crept into a corner on seeing Étienne enter with a woman.

"At last, Étienne, my dearest, I am yours for life!" cried Dinah, throwing her arms round his neck, and clasping him closely, while he took the key from the outside of the door. "Life was a perpetual anguish to me in that house at Anzy. I could bear it no longer; and when the time came for me to proclaim my happiness—well, I had not the courage.—Here I am, your wife with your child! And you have not written to me; you have left me two months without a line."

"But, Dinah, you place me in the greatest difficulty——"

"Do you love me?"

"How can I do otherwise than love you?—But would you not have been wiser to remain at Sancerre?—I am in the most abject poverty, and I fear to drag you into it——"

"Your misery will be paradise to me. I only ask to live here, never to go out——"

"Good God! that is all very fine in words, but——" Dinah sat down and melted into tears as she heard this speech, roughly spoken.

Lousteau could not resist this distress. He clasped the Baroness in his arms and kissed her.

"Do not cry, Didine!" said he; and, as he uttered the words, he saw in the mirror the figure of Madame Cardot, looking at him from the further end of the rooms. "Come, Didine, go with Pamela and get your trunks unloaded," said he in her ear. "Go; do not cry; we will be happy!"

He led her to the door, and then came back to divert the storm.

"Monsieur," said Madame Cardot, "I congratulate myself on having resolved to see for myself the home of the man who was to have been my son-in-law. If my daughter were to die of it, she should never be the wife of such a man as you. You must devote yourself to making your Didine happy, monsieur."

And the virtuous lady walked out, followed by Félicie, who was crying too, for she had become accustomed to Étienne. The dreadful Madame Cardot got into her hackney-coach again, staring insolently at the hapless Dinah, in whose heart the sting still rankled of "that is all very fine in words"; but who, nevertheless, like every woman in love, believed in the murmured, "Do not cry, Didine!"

Lousteau, who was not lacking in the sort of decision which grows out of the vicissitudes of a storm-tossed life, reflected thus:

"Didine is high-minded; when once she knows of my proposed marriage, she will sacrifice herself for my future prospects, and I know how I can manage to let her know." Delighted at having hit on a trick of which the success seemed certain, he danced round to a familiar tune:

"*Larifla, fla, fla!*—And Didine once out of the way," he went on, talking to himself, "I will treat Maman Cardot to a call and a novelette: I have seduced her Félicie at Saint-Eustache—Félicie, guilty through passion, bears in her bosom the pledge of our affection—and *larifla, fla, fla!* The father cannot give me the lie, *fla, fla*—no, nor the girl—*larifla!*—*Ergo,* the notary, his wife, and his daughter are caught, nabbed——"

And, to her great amazement, Dinah discovered Étienne performing a prohibited dance.

"Your arrival and our happiness have turned my head with joy," said he, to explain this crazy mood.

"And I had fancied you had ceased to love me!" exclaimed the poor woman, dropping the handbag she was carrying, and weeping with joy as she sank into a chair.

"Make yourself at home, my darling," said Étienne, laughing in his sleeve; "I must write two lines to excuse myself from a bachelor party, for I mean to devote myself to you. Give your orders; you are at home."

Étienne wrote to Bixiou:

"My dear Boy,—My Baroness has dropped into my arms, and will be fatal to my marriage unless we perform one of the most familiar stratagems of the thousand and one comedies at the Gymnase. I rely on you to come here, like one of Molière's old men, to scold your nephew Léandre for his folly, while the Tenth Muse lies hidden in my bedroom; you must work on her feelings; strike hard, be brutal, offensive. I, you understand, shall express my blind devotion, and shall seem to be deaf, so that you may have to shout at me.

"Come, if you can, at seven o'clock.

"Yours,

"É. Lousteau."

Having sent this letter by a commissionaire to the man who, in all Paris, most delighted in such practical jokes—in the slang of artists, a *"charge"*—Lousteau made a great show of settling the Muse of Sancerre in his apartment. He busied himself in arranging the luggage she had brought, and informed her as to the persons and ways of the house with such perfect good faith, and a glee which overflowed in kind words and caresses, that Dinah believed herself the best-beloved woman in the world. These rooms, where everything bore the stamp of fashion, pleased her far better than her old château.

Pamela Migeon, the intelligent damsel of fourteen, was questioned by the journalist as to whether she would like to be waiting-maid to the imposing Baroness. Pamela, perfectly

enchanted, entered on her duties at once, by going off to order dinner from a restaurant on the boulevard. Dinah was able to judge of the extreme poverty that lay hidden under the purely superficial elegance of this bachelor home when she found none of the necessaries of life. As she took possession of the closets and drawers, she indulged in the fondest dreams; she would alter Étienne's habits, she would make him home-keeping, she would fill his cup of domestic happiness.

The novelty of the position hid its disastrous side; Dinah regarded reciprocated love as the absolution of her sin; she did not yet look beyond the walls of these rooms. Pamela, whose wits were as sharp as those of a *lorette,* went straight to Madame Schontz to beg the loan of some plate, telling her what had happened to Lousteau. After making the child welcome to all she had, Madame Schontz went off to her friend Malaga, that Cardot might be warned of the catastrophe that had befallen his future son-in-law.

The journalist, not in the least uneasy about the crisis as affecting his marriage, was more and more charming to the lady from the provinces. The dinner was the occasion of the delightful child's-play of lovers set at liberty, and happy to be free. When they had had their coffee, and Lousteau was sitting in front of the fire, Dinah on his knee, Pamela ran in with a scared face.

"Here is Monsieur Bixiou!" said she.

"Go into the bedroom," said the journalist to his mistress; "I will soon get rid of him. He is one of my most intimate friends, and I shall have to explain to him my new start in life."

"Oh, ho! dinner for two, and a blue velvet bonnet!" cried Bixiou. "I am off.—Ah! that is what comes of marrying—one must go through some partings. How rich one feels when one begins to move one's sticks, heh?"

"Who talks of marrying?" said Lousteau.

"What! are you not going to be married, then?" cried Bixiou,

"No!"

"No? My word, what next? Are you making a fool of yourself, if you please?—What!—You, who, by the mercy of Heaven, have come across twenty thousand francs a year, and a house, and a wife connected with all the first families of the better middle class—a wife, in short, out of the Rue des Lombards——"

"That will do, Bixiou, enough; it is at an end. Be off!"

"Be off? I have a friend's privileges, and I shall take every advantage of them.—What has come over you?"

"What has 'come over' me is my lady from Sancerre. She is a mother, and we are going to live together happily to the end of our days.—You would have heard it to-morrow, so you may as well be told it now."

"Many chimney-pots are falling on my head, as Arnal says. But if this woman really loves you, my dear fellow, she will go back to the place she came from. Did any provincial woman ever yet find her sea-legs in Paris? She will wound all your vanities. Have you forgotten what a provincial is? She will bore you as much when she is happy as when she is sad; she will have as great a talent for escaping grace as a Parisian has in inventing it.

"Lousteau, listen to me. That a passion should lead you to forget to some extent the times in which we live, is conceivable; but I, my dear fellow, have not the mythological bandage over my eyes.—Well, then, consider your position. For fifteen years you have been tossing in the literary world; you are no longer young, you have padded the hoof till your soles are worn through!—Yes, my boy, you turn your socks under like a street urchin to hide the holes, so that the legs cover the heels! In short, the joke is too stale. Your excuses are more familiar than a patent medicine——"

"I may say to you, like the Regent to Cardinal Dubois, 'That is kicking enough!'" said Lousteau, laughing.

"Oh, venerable young man," replied Bixiou, "the iron has touched the sore to the quick. You are worn out, aren't you? Well, then; in the heyday of youth, under the pressure of

penury, what have you done? You are not in the front rank, and you have not a thousand francs of your own. That is the sum-total of the situation. Can you, in the decline of your powers, support a family by your pen, when your wife, if she is an honest woman, will not have at her command the resources of the woman of the streets, who can extract her thousand-franc note from the depths where milord keeps it safe? You are rushing into the lowest depths of the social theatre.

"And this is only the financial side. Now, consider the political position. We are struggling in an essentially *bourgeois* age, in which honor, virtue, high-mindedness, talent, learning—genius, in short—is summed up in paying your way, owing nobody anything, and conducting your affairs with judgment. Be steady, be respectable, have a wife and children, pay your rent and taxes, serve in the National Guard, and be on the same pattern as all the men of your company—then you may indulge in the loftiest pretensions, rise to the Ministry!—And you have the best chances possible, since you are no Montmorency. You were preparing to fulfil all the conditions insisted on for turning out a political personage, you are capable of every mean trick that is necessary in office, even of pretending to be commonplace—you would have acted it to the life. And just for a woman, who will leave you in the lurch—the end of every eternal passion—in three, five, or seven years—after exhausting your last physical and intellectual powers, you turn your back on the sacred Hearth, on the Rue des Lombards, on a political career, on thirty thousand francs per annum, on respectability and respect!—Ought that to be the end of a man who has done with illusions?

"If you had kept a pot boiling for some actress who gave you your fun for it—well; that is what you may call a cabinet matter. But to live with another man's wife? It is a draft at sight on disaster; it is bolting the bitter pills of vice with none of the gilding."

"That will do. One word answers it all; I love Madame

de la Baudraye, and prefer her to every fortune, to every position the world can offer.—I may have been carried away by a gust of ambition, but everything must give way to the joy of being a father."

"Ah, ha! you have a fancy for paternity? But, wretched man, we are the fathers only of our legitimate children. What is a brat that does not bear your name? The last chapter of the romance.—Your child will be taken from you! We have seen that story in twenty plays these ten years past.

"Society, my dear boy, will drop upon you sooner or later. Read *Adolphe* once more.—Dear me! I fancy I can see you when you and she are used to each other;—I see you dejected, hang-dog, bereft of position and fortune, and fighting like the shareholders of a bogus company when they are tricked by a director!—Your director is happiness."

"Say no more, Bixiou."

"But I have only just begun," said Bixiou. "Listen, my dear boy. Marriage has been out of favor for some time past; but, apart from the advantages it offers in being the only recognized way of certifying heredity, as it affords a good-looking young man, though penniless, the opportunity of making his fortune in two months, it survives in spite of disadvantages. And there is not the man living who would not repent, sooner or later, of having, by his own fault, lost the chance of marrying thirty thousand francs a year."

"You won't understand me," cried Lousteau, in a voice of exasperation. "Go away—she is there——"

"I beg your pardon; why did you not tell me sooner?—You are of age, and so is she," he added in a lower voice, but loud enough to be heard by Dinah. "She will make you repent bitterly of your happiness!——"

"If it is a folly, I intend to commit it.—Good-bye."

"A man gone overboard!" cried Bixiou.

"Devil take those friends who think they have a right to preach to you," said Lousteau, opening the door of the bedroom, where he found Madame de la Baudraye sunk in an armchair and dabbing her eyes with an embroidered handkerchief.

"Oh, why did I come here?" sobbed she. "Good Heavens, why indeed?—Étienne, I am not so provincial as you think me.—You are making a fool of me."

"Darling angel," replied Lousteau, taking Dinah in his arms, lifting her from her chair, and dragging her half dead into the drawing-room, "we have both pledged our future, it is sacrifice for sacrifice. While I was loving you at Sancerre, they were engaging me to be married here, but I refused.—Oh! I was extremely distressed——"

"I am going," cried Dinah, starting wildly to her feet and turning to the door.

"You will stay here, my Didine. All is at an end. And is this fortune so lightly earned after all? Must I not marry a gawky, tow-haired creature, with a red nose, the daughter of a notary, and saddle myself with a stepmother who could give Madame de Piédefer points on the score of bigotry——"

Pamela flew in, and whispered in Lousteau's ear:

"Madame Schontz!"

Lousteau rose, leaving Dinah on the sofa, and went out.

"It is all over with you, my dear," said the woman. "Cardot does not mean to quarrel with his wife for the sake of a son-in-law. The lady made a scene—something like a scene, I can tell you! So, to conclude, the head-clerk, who was the late head-clerk's deputy for two years, agrees to take the girl with the business."

"Mean wretch!" exclaimed Lousteau. "What! in two hours he has made up his mind?"

"Bless me, that is simple enough. The rascal, who knew all the dead man's little secrets, guessed what a fix his master was in from overhearing a few words of the squabble with Madame Cardot. The notary relies on your honor and good-feeling, for the affair is settled. The clerk, whose conduct has been admirable, went so far as to attend mass! A finished hyprocrite, I say—just suits the mamma. You and Cardot will still be friends. He is to be a director in an immense financial concern, and he may be of use to you.—So you have been waked from a sweet dream."

"I have lost a fortune, a wife, and——"

"And a mistress," said Madame Schontz, smiling. "Here you are, more than married; you will be insufferable, you will be always wanting to get home, there will be nothing loose about you, neither your clothes nor your habits. And, after all, my Arthur does things in style. I will be faithful to him and cut Malaga's acquaintance.

"Let me peep at her through the door—your Sancerre Muse," she went on. "Is there no finer bird than that to be found in the desert?" she exclaimed. "You are cheated! She is dignified, lean, lachrymose; she only needs Lady Dudley's turban!"

"What is it now?" asked Madame de la Baudraye, who had heard the rustle of a silk dress and the murmur of a woman's voice.

"It is, my darling, that we are now indissolubly united.—I have just had an answer to the letter you saw me write, which was to break off my marriage——"

"So that was the party which you gave up?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I will be more than your wife—I am your slave, I give you my life," said the poor deluded creature. "I did not believe I could love you more than I did!—Now I shall not be a mere incident, but your whole life?"

"Yes, my beautiful, my generous Didine."

"Swear to me," said she, "that only death shall divide us."

Lousteau was ready to sweeten his vows with the most fascinating prettinesses. And this was why. Between the door of the apartment where he had taken the lorette's farewell kiss, and that of the drawing-room, where the Muse was reclining, bewildered by such a succession of shocks, Lousteau had remembered little De la Baudraye's precarious health, his fine fortune, and Bianchon's remark about Dinah, "She will be a rich widow!" and he said to himself, "I would a hundred times rather have Madame de la Baudraye for a wife than Félicie!"

His plan of action was quickly decided on; he determined

to play the farce of passion once more, and to perfection. His mean self-interest and his false vehemence of passion had disastrous results. Madame de la Baudraye, when she set out from Sancerre for Paris, had intended to live in rooms of her own quite near to Lousteau; but the proofs of devotion her lover had given her by giving up such brilliant prospects, and yet more the perfect happiness of the first days of their illicit union, kept her from mentioning such a parting. The second day was to be—and indeed was—a high festival, in which such a suggestion proposed to "her angel" would have been a discordant note.

Lousteau, on his part, anxious to make Dinah feel herself dependent on him, kept her in a state of constant intoxication by incessant amusement. These circumstances hindered two persons so clever as these were from avoiding the slough into which they fell—that of a life in common, a piece of folly of which, unfortunately, many instances may be seen in Paris in literary circles.

And thus was the whole programme played out of a provincial amour, so satirically described by Lousteau to Madame de la Baudraye—a fact which neither he nor she remembered. Passion is born a deaf-mute.

This winter in Paris was to Madame de la Baudraye all that the month of October had been at Sancerre. Étienne, to initiate "his wife" into Paris life, varied this honeymoon by evenings at the play, where Dinah would only go to the stage box. At first Madame de la Baudraye preserved some remnants of her countrified modesty; she was afraid of being seen; she hid her happiness. She would say:

"Monsieur de Clagny or Monsieur Gravier may have followed me to Paris." She was afraid of Sancerre even in Paris.

Lousteau, who was excessively vain, educated Dinah, took her to the best dressmakers, and pointed out to her the most fashionable women, advising her to take them as models for imitation. And Madame de la Baudraye's provincial appear-

ance was soon a thing of the past. Lousteau, when his friends met him, was congratulated on his conquest.

All through that season Étienne wrote little and got very much into debt, though Dinah, who was proud, bought all her clothes out of her savings, and fancied she had not been the smallest expense to her beloved. By the end of three months Dinah was acclimatized; she had reveled in the music at the Italian opera; she knew the pieces "on" at all theatres, and the actors and jests of the day; she had become inured to this life of perpetual excitement, this rapid torrent in which everything is forgotten. She no longer craned her neck or stood with her nose in the air, like an image of Amazement, at the constant surprises that Paris has for a stranger. She had learned to breathe that witty, vitalizing, teeming atmosphere where clever people feel themselves in their element, and which they can no longer bear to quit.

One morning, as she read the papers, for Lousteau had them all, two lines carried her back to Sancerre and the past, two lines that seemed not unfamiliar—as follows:

"Monsieur le Baron de Clagny, Public Prosecutor to the Criminal Court at Sancerre, has been appointed Deputy Public Prosecutor to the Supreme Court in Paris."

"How well that worthy lawyer loves you!" said the journalist, smiling.

"Poor man!" said she. "What did I tell you? He is following me."

Étienne and Dinah were just then at the most dazzling and fervid stage of a passion when each is perfectly accustomed to the other, and yet love has not lost its freshness and relish. The lovers know each other well, but all is not yet understood; they have not been a second time to the same secret haunts of the soul; they have not studied each other till they know, as they must later, the very thought, word, and gesture that responds to every event, the greatest and the smallest. Enchantment reigns; there are no collisions, no differences of opinion, no cold looks. Their two souls are always on the same side. And Dinah would speak the magical

words, emphasized by the yet more magical expression and looks which every woman can use under such circumstances.

"When you cease to love me, kill me.—If you should cease to love me, I believe I could kill you first and myself after."

To this sweet exaggeration, Lousteau would reply:

"All I ask of God is to see you as constant as I shall be. It is you who will desert me!"

"My love is supreme."

"Supreme," echoed Lousteau. "Come, now? Suppose I am dragged away to a bachelor party, and find there one of my former mistresses, and she makes fun of me; I, out of vanity, behave as if I were free, and do not come in here till next morning—would you still love me?"

"A woman is only sure of being loved when she is preferred; and if you came back to me, if—— Oh! you make me understand what the happiness would be of forgiving the man I adore."

"Well, then, I am truly loved for the first time in my life!" cried Lousteau.

"At last you understand that!" said she.

Lousteau proposed that they should each write a letter setting forth the reasons which would compel them to end by suicide. Once in possession of such a document, each might kill the other without danger in case of infidelity. But in spite of mutual promises, neither wrote the letter.

The journalist, happy for the moment, promised himself that he would deceive Dinah when he should be tired of her, and would sacrifice everything to the requirements of that deception. To him Madame de la Baudraye was a fortune in herself. At the same time, he felt the yoke.

Dinah, by consenting to this union, showed a generous mind and the power derived from self-respect. In this absolute intimacy, in which both lovers put off their masks, the young woman never abdicated her modesty, her masculine rectitude, and the strength peculiar to ambitious souls, which formed the basis of her character. Lousteau involuntarily held her in high esteem. As a Parisian, Dinah was superior

to the most fascinating courtesan; she could be as amusing and as witty as Malaga; but her extensive information, her habits of mind, her vast reading enabled her to generalize her wit, while the Florines and the Schontzes exerted theirs over a very narrow circle.

"There is in Dinah," said Étienne to Bixiou, "the stuff to make both a Ninon and a De Staël."

"A woman who combines an encyclopædia and a seraglio is very dangerous," replied the mocking spirit.

When the expected infant became a visible fact, Madame de la Baudraye would be seen no more; but before shutting herself up, never to go out unless into the country, she was bent on being present at the first performance of a play by Nathan. This literary solemnity occupied the minds of the two thousand persons who regard themselves as constituting "all Paris." Dinah, who had never been at a first night's performance, was very full of natural curiosity. She had by this time arrived at such a pitch of affection for Lousteau that she gloried in her misconduct; she exerted a sort of savage strength to defy the world; she was determined to look it in the face without turning her head aside.

She dressed herself to perfection, in a style suited to her delicate looks and the sickly whiteness of her face. Her pallid complexion gave her an expression of refinement, and her black hair in smooth bands enhanced her pallor. Her brilliant gray eyes looked finer than ever, set in dark rings. But a terribly distressing incident awaited her. By a very simple chance, the box given to the journalist, on the first tier, was next to that which Anna Grossetête had taken. The two intimate friends did not even bow; neither chose to acknowledge the other. At the end of the first act Lousteau left his seat, abandoning Dinah to the fire of eyes, the glare of opera-glasses; while the Baronne de Fontaine and the Comtesse Marie de Vandenesse, who accompanied her, received some of the most distinguished men of fashion.

Dinah's solitude was all the more distressing because she had not the art of putting a good face to the matter by exam-

ining the company through her opera-glass. In vain did she try to assume a dignified and thoughtful attitude, and fix her eyes on vacancy; she was overpoweringly conscious of being the object of general attention; she could not disguise her discomfort, and lapsed a little into provincialism, displaying her handkerchief and making involuntary movements of which she had almost cured herself. At last, between the second and third acts, a man had himself admitted to Dinah's box! It was Monsieur de Clagny.

"I am happy to see you, to tell you how much I am pleased by your promotion," said she.

"Oh! Madame, for whom should I come to Paris——?"

"What!" said she. "Have I anything to do with your appointment?"

"Everything," said he. "Since you left Sancerre, it had become intolerable to me; I was dying——"

"Your sincere friendship does me good," replied she, holding out her hand. "I am in a position to make much of my true friends; I now know their value.—I feared I must have lost your esteem, but the proof you have given me by this visit touches me more deeply than your ten years' attachment."

"You are an object of curiosity to the whole house," said the lawyer. "Oh! my dear, is this a part for you to be playing? Could you not be happy and yet remain honored?—I have just heard that you are Monsieur Étienne Lousteau's mistress, that you live together as man and wife!—You have broken for ever with society; even if you should some day marry your lover, the time will come when you will feel the want of the respectability you now despise. Ought you not to be in a home of your own with your mother, who loves you well enough to protect you with her ægis?—Appearances at least would be saved."

"I am in the wrong to have come here," replied she, "that is all.—I have bid farewell to all the advantages which the world confers on women who know how to reconcile happiness and the proprieties. My abnegation is so complete that I only wish I could clear a vast space about me to make a

desert of my love, full of God, of *him*, and of myself.—We have made too many sacrifices on both sides not to be united —united by disgrace if you will, but indissolubly one. I am happy; so happy that I can love freely, my friend, and confide in you more than of old—for I need a friend."

The lawyer was magnanimous, nay, truly great. To this declaration, in which Dinah's soul thrilled, he replied in heartrending tones:

"I wanted to go to see you, to be sure that you were loved: I shall now be easy and no longer alarmed as to your future.—But will your lover appreciate the magnitude of your sacrifice; is there any gratitude in his affection?"

"Come to the Rue des Martyrs and you will see!"

"Yes, I will call," he replied. "I have already passed your door without daring to inquire for you.—You do not yet know the literary world. There are glorious exceptions, no doubt; but these men of letters drag terrible evils in their train; among these I account publicity as one of the greatest, for it blights everything. A woman may commit herself with——"

"With a Public Prosecutor?" the Baronne put in with a smile.

"Well!—and then after a rupture there is still something to fall back on; the world has known nothing. But with a more or less famous man the public is thoroughly informed. Why, look there! What an example you have close at hand! You are sitting back to back with the Comtesse Marie Vandenesse, who was within an ace of committing the utmost folly for a more celebrated man than Lousteau—for Nathan—and now they do not even recognize each other. After going to the very edge of the precipice, the Countess was saved, no one knows how; she neither left her husband nor her house; but as a famous man was concerned, she was the talk of the town for a whole winter. But for her husband's great fortune, great name, and high position, but for the admirable management of that true statesman—whose conduct to his wife, they say, was perfect—she would have been ruined; in

her position no other woman would have remained respected as she is."

"And how was Sancerre when you came away?" asked Madame de la Baudraye, to change the subject.

"Monsieur de la Baudraye announced that your expected confinement after so many years made it necessary that it should take place in Paris, and that he had insisted on your going to be attended by the first physicians," replied Monsieur de Clagny, guessing what it was that Dinah most wanted to know. "And so, in spite of the commotion to which your departure gave rise, you still have your legal status."

"Why!" she exclaimed, "can Monsieur de la Baudraye still hope——"

"Your husband, madame, did what he always does—made a little calculation."

The lawyer left the box when the journalist returned, bowing with dignity.

"You are a greater hit than the piece," said Étienne to Dinah.

This brief triumph brought greater happiness to the poor woman than she had ever known in the whole of her provincial existence; still, as they left the theatre she was very grave.

"What ails you, my Didine?" asked Lousteau.

"I am wondering how a woman succeeds in conquering the world?"

"There are two ways. One is by being Madame de Staël, the other is by having two hundred thousand francs a year."

"Society," said she, "asserts its hold on us by appealing to our vanity, our love of appearances.—Pooh! We will be philosophers!"

That evening was the last gleam of the delusive well-being in which Madame de la Baudraye had lived since coming to Paris. Three days later she observed a cloud on Lousteau's brow as he walked round the little garden-plot smoking a cigar. This woman, who had acquired from her husband the

habit and the pleasure of never owing anybody a sou, was informed that the household was penniless, with two quarters' rent owing, and on the eve, in fact, of an execution.

This reality of Paris life pierced Dinah's heart like a thorn; she repented of having tempted Étienne into the extravagances of love. It is so difficult to pass from pleasure to work, that happiness has wrecked more poems than sorrows ever helped to flow in sparkling jets. Dinah, happy in seeing Étienne taking his ease, smoking a cigar after breakfast, his face beaming as he basked like a lizard in the sunshine, could not summon up courage enough to make herself the bum-bailiff of a magazine.

It struck her that through the worthy Migeon, Pamela's father, she might pawn the few jewels she possessed, on which her "uncle," for she was learning to talk the slang of the town, advanced her nine hundred francs. She kept three hundred for her baby-clothes and the expenses of her illness, and joyfully presented the sum due to Lousteau, who was ploughing, furrow by furrow, or, if you will, line by line, through a novel for a periodical.

"Dearest heart," said she, "finish your novel without making any sacrifice to necessity; polish the style, work up the subject.—I have played the fine lady too long; I am going to be the housewife and attend to business."

For the last four months Étienne had been taking Dinah to the Café Riche to dine every day, a corner being always kept for them. The countrywoman was in dismay at being told that five hundred francs were owing for the last fortnight.

"What! we have been drinking wine at six francs a bottle! A sole *Normande* costs five francs!—and twenty centimes for a roll?" she exclaimed, as she looked through the bill Lousteau showed her.

"Well, it makes very little difference to us whether we are robbed at a restaurant or by a cook," said Lousteau.

"Henceforth, for the cost of your dinner, you shall live like a prince."

Having induced the landlord to let her have a kitchen and two servants' rooms, Madame de la Baudraye wrote a few lines to her mother, begging her to send her some linen and a loan of a thousand francs. She received two trunks full of linen, some plate, and two thousand francs, sent by the hand of an honest and pious cook recommended her by her mother.

Ten days after the evening at the theatre when they had met, Monsieur de Clagny came to call at four o'clock, after coming out of court, and found Madame de la Baudraye making a little cap. The sight of this proud and ambitious woman, whose mind was so accomplished, and who had queened it so well at the Château d'Anzy, now condescending to household cares and sewing for the coming infant, moved the poor lawyer, who had just left the bench. And as he saw the pricks on one of the taper fingers he had so often kissed, he understood that Madame de la Baudraye was not merely playing at this maternal task.

In the course of this first interview the magistrate saw to the depths of Dinah's soul. This perspicacity in a man so much in love was a superhuman effort. He saw that Didine meant to be the journalist's guardian spirit and lead him into a nobler road; she had seen that the difficulties of his practical life were due to some moral defects. Between two beings united by love—in one so genuine, and in the other so well feigned—more than one confidence had been exchanged in the course of four months. Notwithstanding the care with which Étienne wrapped up his true self, a word now and then had not failed to enlighten Dinah as to the previous life of a man whose talents were so hampered by poverty, so perverted by bad examples, so thwarted by obstacles beyond his courage to surmount. "He will be a greater man if life is easy to him," said she to herself. And she strove to make him happy, to give him the sense of a sheltered home by dint of such economy and method as are familiar to provincial folks. Thus Dinah became a housekeeper, as she had become a poet, by the soaring of her soul towards the heights.

"His happiness will be my absolution."

These words, wrung from Madame de la Baudraye by her

friend the lawyer, accounted for the existing state of things. The publicity of his triumph, flaunted by Étienne on the evening of the first performance, had very plainly shown the lawyer what Lousteau's purpose was. To Étienne, Madame de la Baudraye was, to use his own phrase, "a fine feather in his cap." Far from preferring the joys of a shy and mysterious passion, of hiding such exquisite happiness from the eyes of the world, he found a vulgar satisfaction in displaying the first woman of respectability who had ever honored him with her affection.

The Judge, however, was for some time deceived by the attentions which any man would lavish on any woman in Madame de la Baudraye's situation, and Lousteau made them doubly charming by the ingratiating ways characteristic of men whose manners are naturally attractive. There are, in fact, men who have something of the monkey in them by nature, and to whom the assumption of the most engaging forms of sentiment is so easy that the actor is not detected; and Lousteau's natural gifts had been fully developed on the stage on which he had hitherto figured.

Between the months of April and July, when Dinah expected her confinement, she discovered why it was that Lousteau had not triumphed over poverty; he was idle and had no power of will. The brain, to be sure, must obey its own laws; it recognizes neither the exigencies of life nor the voice of honor; a man cannot write a great book because a woman is dying, or to pay a discreditable debt, or to bring up a family; at the same time, there is no great talent without a strong will. These twin forces are requisite for the erection of the vast edifice of personal glory. A distinguished genius keeps his brain in a productive condition, just as the knights of old kept their weapons always ready for battle. They conquer indolence, they deny themselves enervating pleasures, or indulge only to a fixed limit proportioned to their powers. This explains the life of such men as Walter Scott, Cuvier, Voltaire, Newton, Buffon, Bayle, Bossuet, Leibnitz, Lopez de Vega, Calderon, Boccaccio, Aretino, Aristotle—in short,

every man who delighted, governed, or led his contemporaries.

A man may and ought to pride himself more on his will than on his talent. Though Talent has its germ in a cultivated gift, Will means the incessant conquest of his instincts, of proclivities subdued and mortified, and difficulties of every kind heroically defeated. The abuse of smoking encouraged Lousteau's indolence. Tobacco, which can lull grief, inevitably numbs a man's energy.

Then, while the cigar deteriorated him physically, criticism as a profession morally stultified a man so easily tempted by pleasure. Criticism is as fatal to the critic as seeing two sides to a question is to a pleader. In these professions the judgment is undermined, the mind loses its lucid rectitude. The writer lives by taking sides. Thus, we may distinguish two kinds of criticism, as in painting we may distinguish art from practical dexterity. Criticism, after the pattern of most contemporary leader-writers, is the expression of judgments formed at random in a more or less witty way, just as an advocate pleads in court on the most contradictory briefs. The newspaper critic always finds a subject to work up in the book he is discussing. Done after this fashion, the business is well adapted to indolent brains, to men devoid of the sublime faculty of imagination, or, possessed of it indeed, but lacking courage to cultivate it. Every play, every book comes to their pen as a subject, making no demand on their imagination, and of which they simply write a report, seriously or in irony, according to the mood of the moment. As to an opinion, whatever it may be, French wit can always justify it, being admirably ready to defend either side of any case. And conscience counts for so little, these *bravi* have so little value for their own words, that they will loudly praise in the green-room the work they tear to tatters in print.

Nay, men have been known to transfer their services from one paper to another without being at the pains to consider that the opinions of the new sheet must be diametrically antagonistic to those of the old. Madame de la Baudraye could smile to see Lousteau with one article on the Legitimist side

and one on the side of the new dynasty, both on the same occasion. She admired the maxim he preached:

"We are the attorneys of public opinion."

The other kind of criticism is a science. It necessitates a thorough comprehension of each work, a lucid insight into the tendencies of the age, the adoption of a system, and faith in fixed principles—that is to say, a scheme of jurisprudence, a summing-up, and a verdict. The critic is then a magistrate of ideas, the censor of his time; he fulfils a sacred function; while in the former case he is but an acrobat who turns somersaults for a living as long as he has a leg to stand on. Between Claude Vignon and Lousteau lay the gulf that divides mere dexterity from art.

Dinah, whose mind was soon freed from rust, and whose intellect was by no means narrow, had ere long taken literary measure of her idol. She saw Lousteau working up to the last minute under the most discreditable compulsion, and scamping his work, as painters say of a picture from which sound technique is absent; but she would excuse him by saying, "He is a poet!" so anxious was she to justify him in her own eyes. When she thus guessed the secret of many a writer's existence, she also guessed that Lousteau's pen could never be trusted to as a resource.

Then her love for him led her to take a step she would never have thought of for her own sake. Through her mother she tried to negotiate with her husband for an allowance, but without Étienne's knowledge; for, as she thought, it would be an offence to his delicate feelings, which must be considered. A few days before the end of July, Dinah crumpled up in her wrath the letter from her mother containing Monsieur de la Baudraye's ultimatum:

"Madame de la Baudraye cannot need an allowance in Paris when she can live in perfect luxury at her Château of Anzy: she may return."

Lousteau picked up this letter and read it.

"I will avenge you!" said he to Dinah in the ominous tone that delights a woman when her antipathies are flattered.

Five days after this Bianchon and Duriau, the famous ladies' doctor, were engaged at Lousteau's; for he, ever since little La Baudraye's reply, had been making a great display of his joy and importance over the advent of the infant. Monsieur de Clagny and Madame Piédefer—sent for in all haste—were to be the godparents, for the cautious magistrate feared lest Lousteau should commit some compromising blunder. Madame de la Baudraye gave birth to a boy that might have filled a queen with envy who hoped for an heir-presumptive.

Bianchon and Monsieur de Clagny went off to register the child at the Mayor's office as the son of Monsieur and Madame de la Baudraye, unknown to Étienne, who, on his part, rushed off to a printer's to have this circular set up:

"Madame la Baronne de la Baudraye is happily delivered of a son.

"Monsieur Etienne Lousteau has the pleasure of informing you of the fact.

"The mother and child are doing well."

Lousteau had already sent out sixty of these announcements when Monsieur de Clagny, on coming to make inquiries, happened to see the list of persons at Sancerre to whom Lousteau proposed to send this amazing notice, written below the names of the persons in Paris to whom it was already gone. The lawyer confiscated the list and the remainder of the circulars, showed them to Madame Piédefer, begging her on no account to allow Lousteau to carry on this atrocious jest, and jumped into a cab. The devoted friend then ordered from the same printer another announcement in the following words:

"Madame la Baronne de la Baudraye is happily delivered of a son.

"Monsieur le Baron de la Baudraye has the honor of informing you of the fact.

"Mother and child are doing well."

After seeing the proofs destroyed, the form of type, everything that could bear witness to the existence of the former document, Monsieur de Clagny set to work to intercept those that had been sent; in many cases he changed them at the porter's lodge, he got back thirty into his own hands, and at last, after three days of hard work, only one of the original notes existed, that, namely, sent to Nathan.

Five times had the lawyer called on the great man without finding him. By the time Monsieur de Clagny was admitted, after requesting an interview, the story of the announcement was known to all Paris. Some persons regarded it as one of those waggish calumnies, a sort of stab to which every reputation, even the most ephemeral, is exposed; others said they had read the paper and returned it to some friend of the La Baudraye family; a great many declaimed against the immorality of journalists; in short, this last remaining specimen was regarded as a curiosity. Florine, with whom Nathan was living, had shown it about, stamped in the post as paid, and addressed in Étienne's hand. So, as soon as the judge spoke of the announcement, Nathan began to smile.

"Give up that monument of recklessness and folly?" cried he. "That autograph is one of those weapons which an athlete in the circus cannot afford to lay down. That note proves that Lousteau has no heart, no taste, no dignity; that he knows nothing of the world nor of public morality; that he insults himself when he can find no one else to insult.—None but the son of a provincial citizen imported from Sancerre to become a poet, but who is only the *bravo* of some contemptible magazine, could ever have sent out such a circular letter, as you must allow, monsieur. This is a document indispensable to the archives of the age.—To-day Lousteau flatters me, to-morrow he may ask for my head.—Excuse me, I forgot you were a judge.

"I have gone through a passion for a lady, a great lady, as far superior to Madame de la Baudraye as your fine feeling, monsieur, is superior to Lousteau's vulgar retaliation; but I would have died rather than utter her name. A few months

of her airs and graces cost me a hundred thousand francs and my prospects for life; but I do not think the price too high!—And I have never murmured!—If a woman betrays the secret of her passion, it is the supreme offering of her love, but a man!—He must be a Lousteau!

"No, I would not give up that paper for a thousand crowns."

"Monsieur," said the lawyer at last, after an eloquent battle lasting half an hour, "I have called on fifteen or sixteen men of letters about this affair, and can it be that you are the only one immovable by an appeal of honor? It is not for Étienne Lousteau that I plead, but for a woman and child, both equally ignorant of the damage thus done to their fortune, their prospects, and their honor.—Who knows, monsieur, whether you might not some day be compelled to plead for some favor of justice for a friend, for some person whose honor was dearer to you than your own.—It might be remembered against you that you had been ruthless.—Can such a man as you are hesitate?" added Monsieur de Clagny.

"I only wished you to understand the extent of the sacrifice," replied Nathan, giving up the letter, as he reflected on the judge's influence and accepted this implied bargain.

When the journalist's stupid jest had been counteracted, Monsieur de Clagny went to give him a rating in the presence of Madame Piédefer; but he found Lousteau fuming with irritation.

"What I did, monsieur, I did with a purpose!" replied Étienne. "Monsieur de la Baudraye has sixty thousand francs a year, and refuses to make his wife an allowance; I wished to make him feel that the child is in my power."

"Yes, monsieur, I quite suspected it," replied the lawyer. "For that reason I readily agreed to be little Polydore's godfather, and he is registered as the son of the Baron and Baronne de la Baudraye; if you have the feelings of a father, you ought to rejoice in knowing that the child is heir to one of the finest entailed estates in France."

"And pray, sir, is the mother to die of hunger?"

"Be quite easy," said the lawyer bitterly, having dragged

from Lousteau the expression of feeling he had so long been expecting. "I will undertake to transact the matter with Monsieur de la Baudraye."

Monsieur de Clagny left the house with a chill at his heart.

Dinah, his idol, was loved for her money. Would she not, when too late, have her eyes opened?

"Poor woman!" said the lawyer, as he walked away. And this justice we will do him—for to whom should justice be done unless to a Judge?—he loved Dinah too sincerely to regard her degradation as a means of triumph one day; he was all pity and devotion; he really loved her.

The care and nursing of the infant, its cries, the quiet needed for the mother during the first few days, and the ubiquity of Madame Piédefer, were so entirely adverse to literary labors, that Lousteau moved up to the three rooms taken on the first floor for the old bigot. The journalist, obliged to go to first performances without Dinah, and living apart from her, found an indescribable charm in the use of his liberty. More than once he submitted to be taken by the arm and dragged off to some jollification; more than once he found himself at the house of a friend's mistress in the heart of bohemia. He again saw women brilliantly young and splendidly dressed, in whom economy seemed treason to their youth and power. Dinah, in spite of her striking beauty, after nursing her baby for three months, could not stand comparison with these perishable blossoms, so soon faded, but so showy as long as they live rooted in opulence.

Home life had, nevertheless, a strong attraction for Étienne. In three months the mother and daughter, with the help of the cook from Sancerre and of little Pamela, had given the apartment a quite changed appearance. The journalist found his breakfast and his dinner there served with a sort of luxury. Dinah, handsome and nicely dressed, was careful to anticipate her dear Étienne's wishes, and he felt himself the king of his home, where everything, even the baby, was subject to his selfishness. Dinah's affection was to be seen in every trifle,

Lousteau could not possibly cease the entrancing deceptions of his unreal passion.

Dinah, meanwhile, was aware of a source of ruin, both to her love and to the household, in the kind of life into which Lousteau had allowed himself to drift. At the end of ten months she weaned her baby, installed her mother in the upstairs rooms, and restored the family intimacy which indissolubly links a man and woman when the woman is loving and clever. One of the most striking circumstances in Benjamin Constant's novel, one of the explanations of Ellénore's desertion, is the want of daily—or, if you will, of nightly—intercourse between her and Adolphe. Each of the lovers has a separate home; they have both submitted to the world and saved appearances. Ellénore, repeatedly left to herself, is compelled to vast labors of affection to expel the thoughts of release which captivate Adolphe when absent. The constant exchange of glances and thoughts in domestic life gives a woman such power that a man needs stronger reasons for desertion than she will ever give him so long as she loves him.

This was an entirely new phase both to Étienne and to Dinah. Dinah intended to be indispensable; she wanted to infuse fresh energy into this man, whose weakness smiled upon her, for she thought it a security. She found him subjects, sketched the treatment, and at a pinch, would write whole chapters. She revived the vitality of this dying talent by transfusing fresh blood into his veins; she supplied him with ideas and opinions. In short, she produced two books which were a success. More than once she saved Lousteau's self-esteem by dictating, correcting, or finishing his articles when he was in despair at his own lack of ideas. The secret of this collaboration was strictly preserved; Madame Piédefer knew nothing of it.

This mental galvanism was rewarded by improved pay, enabling them to live comfortably till the end of 1838. Lousteau became used to seeing Dinah do his work, and he paid her—as the French people say in their vigorous lingo—in "monkey money," nothing for her pains. This expenditure

in self-sacrifice becomes a treasure which generous souls prize, and the more she gave the more she loved Lousteau; the time soon came when Dinah felt that it would be too bitter a grief ever to give him up.

But then another child was coming, and this year was a terrible trial. In spite of the precautions of the two women, Étienne contracted debts; he worked himself to death to pay them off while Dinah was laid up; and, knowing him as she did, she thought him heroic. But after this effort, appalled at having two women, two children, and two maids on his hands, he was incapable of the struggle to maintain a family by his pen when he had failed to maintain even himself. So he let things take their chance. Then the ruthless speculator exaggerated the farce of love-making at home to secure greater liberty abroad.

Dinah proudly endured the burden of life without support. The one idea, "He loves me!" gave her superhuman strength. She worked as hard as the most energetic spirits of our time. At the risk of her beauty and health, Didine was to Lousteau what Mademoiselle Delachaux was to Gardane, in Diderot's noble and true tale. But while sacrificing herself, she committed the magnanimous blunder of sacrificing dress. She had her gowns dyed, and wore nothing but black. She stank of black, as Malaga said, making fun mercilessly of Lousteau.

By the end of 1839, Étienne, following the example of Louis XV., had, by dint of gradual capitulations of conscience, come to the point of establishing a distinction between his own money and the housekeeping money, just as Louis XV. drew the line between his privy purse and the public moneys. He deceived Dinah as to his earnings. On discovering this baseness, Madame de la Baudraye went through fearful tortures of jealousy. She wanted to live two lives—the life of the world and the life of a literary woman; she accompanied Lousteau to every first-night performance, and could detect in him many impulses of wounded vanity, for her black attire rubbed off, as it were, on him, clouding his brow, and sometimes leading him to be quite brutal. He was really the

woman of the two; and he had all a woman's exacting perversity; he would reproach Dinah for the dowdiness of her appearance, even while benefiting by the sacrifice, which to a mistress is so cruel—exactly like a woman who, after sending a man through a gutter to save her honor, tells him she "cannot bear dirt!" when he comes out.

Dinah then found herself obliged to gather up the rather loose reins of power by which a clever woman drives a man devoid of will. But in so doing she could not fail to lose much of her moral lustre. Such suspicions as she betrayed drag a woman into quarrels which lead to disrespect, because she herself comes down from the high level on which she had at first placed herself. Next she made some concessions; Lousteau was allowed to entertain several of his friends—Nathan, Bixiou, Blondet, Finot—whose manners, language, and intercourse were depraving. They tried to convince Madame de la Baudraye that her principles and aversions were a survival of provincial prudishness; and they preached the creed of woman's superiority.

Before long, her jealousy put weapons into Lousteau's hands. During the carnival of 1840, she disguised herself to go to the balls at the Opera-house, and to suppers where she met courtesans, in order to keep an eye on all Étienne's amusements.

On the day of Mid-Lent—or rather, at eight on the morning after—Dinah came home from the ball in her fancy dress to go to bed. She had gone to spy on Lousteau, who, believing her to be ill, had engaged himself for that evening to Fanny Beaupré. The journalist, warned by a friend, had behaved so as to deceive the poor woman, only too ready to be deceived.

As she stepped out of the hired cab, Dinah met Monsieur de la Baudraye, to whom the porter pointed her out. The little old man took his wife by the arm, saying, in an icy tone:

"So this is you, madame!"

This sudden advent of conjugal authority, before which she felt herself so small, and, above all, these words, almost froze the heart of the unhappy woman caught in the costume of a

débardeur. To escape Étienne's eye the more effectually, she had chosen a dress he was not likely to detect her in. She took advantage of the mask she still had on to escape without replying, changed her dress, and went up to her mother's rooms, where she found her husband waiting for her. In spite of her assumed dignity, she blushed in the old man's presence.

"What do you want of me, monsieur?" she asked. "Are we not separated forever?"

"Actually, yes," said Monsieur de la Baudraye. "Legally, no."

Madame Piédefer was telegraphing signals to her daughter, which Dinah presently observed and understood.

"Nothing could have brought you here but your own interests," she said, in a bitter tone.

"*Our* interests," said the little man coldly, "for we have two children.—Your Uncle Silas Piédefer is dead, at New York, where, after having made and lost several fortunes in various parts of the world, he has finally left some seven or eight hundred thousand francs—they say twelve—but there is stock-in-trade to be sold. I am the chief in our common interests, and act for you."

"Oh!" cried Dinah, "in everything that relates to business, I trust no one but Monsieur de Clagny. He knows the law, come to terms with him; what he does, will be done right."

"I have no occasion for Monsieur de Clagny," answered Monsieur de la Baudraye, "to take my children from you——"

"Your children!" exclaimed Dinah. "Your children, to whom you have not sent a sou! *Your* children!" She burst into a loud shout of laughter; but Monsieur de la Baudraye's unmoved coolness threw ice on the explosion.

"Your mother has just brought them to show me," he went on. "They are charming boys. I do not intend to part from them. I shall take them to our house at Anzy, if it were only to save them from seeing their mother disguised like a——"

"Silence!" said Madame de la Baudraye imperatively. "What do you want of me that brought you here?"

"A power of attorney to receive our uncle Silas' property."

Dinah took a pen, wrote two lines to Monsieur de Clagny, and desired her husband to call again in the afternoon.

At five o'clock, Monsieur de Clagny—who had been promoted to the post of Attorney-General—enlightened Madame de la Baudraye as to her position; still, he undertook to arrange everything by a bargain with the old fellow, whose visit had been prompted by avarice alone. Monsieur de la Baudraye, to whom his wife's power of attorney was indispensable to enable him to deal with the business as he wished, purchased it by certain concessions. In the first place, he undertook to allow her ten thousand francs a year so long as she found it convenient—so the document was worded—to reside in Paris; the children, each on attaining the age of six, were to be placed in Monsieur de la Baudraye's keeping. Finally, the lawyer extracted the payment of the allowance in advance.

Little La Baudraye, who came jauntily enough to say goodbye to his wife and *his* children, appeared in a white india-rubber overcoat. He was so firm on his feet, and so exactly like the La Baudraye of 1836, that Dinah despaired of ever burying the dreadful little dwarf. From the garden, where he was smoking a cigar, the journalist could watch Monsieur de la Baudraye for so long as it took the little reptile to cross the forecourt, but that was enough for Lousteau; it was plain to him that the little man had intended to wreck every hope of his dying that his wife might have conceived.

This short scene made a considerable change in the writer's secret scheming. As he smoked a second cigar, he seriously reviewed the position.

His life with Madame de la Baudraye had hitherto cost him quite as much as it had cost her. To use the language of business, the two sides of the account balanced, and they could, if necessary, cry quits. Considering how small his income was, and how hardly he earned it, Lousteau regarded himself, morally speaking, as the creditor. It was, no doubt, a favorable moment for throwing the woman over. Tired at the

end of three years of playing a comedy which never can become a habit, he was perpetually concealing his weariness; and this fellow, who was accustomed to disguise none of his feelings, compelled himself to wear a smile at home like that of a debtor in the presence of his creditor. This compulsion was every day more intolerable.

Hitherto the immense advantages he foresaw in the future had given him strength; but when he saw Monsieur de la Baudraye embark for the United States, as briskly as if it were to go down to Rouen in a steamboat, he ceased to believe in the future.

He went in from the garden to the pretty drawing-room, where Dinah had just taken leave of her husband.

"Étienne," said Madame de la Baudraye, "do you know what my lord and master has proposed to me? In the event of my wishing to return to live at Anzy during his absence, he has left his orders, and he hopes that my mother's good advice will weigh with me, and that I shall go back there with my children."

"It is very good advice," replied Lousteau drily, knowing the passionate disclaimer that Dinah expected, and indeed begged for with her eyes.

The tone, the words, the cold look, all hit the hapless woman so hard, who lived only in her love, that two large tears trickled slowly down her cheeks, while she did not speak a word, and Lousteau only saw them when she took out her handkerchief to wipe away these two beads of anguish.

"What is it, Didine?" he asked, touched to the heart by this excessive sensibility.

"Just as I was priding myself on having won our freedom," said she—"at the cost of my fortune—by selling—what is most precious to a mother's heart—selling my children!—for he is to have them from the age of six—and I cannot see them without going to Sancerre!—and that is torture!—Ah, dear God! What have I done——?"

Lousteau knelt down by her and kissed her hands with a lavish display of coaxing and petting.

"You do not understand me," said he: "I blame myself, for I am not worth such sacrifices, dear angel. I am, in a literary sense, a quite second-rate man. If the day comes when I can no longer cut a figure at the bottom of the newspaper, the editors will let me lie, like an old shoe flung into the rubbish heap. Remember, we tight-rope dancers have no retiring pension! The State would have too many clever men on its hands if it started on such a career of beneficence. I am forty-two, and I am as idle as a marmot. I feel it—I know it"—and he took her hand—"my love can only be fatal to you.

"As you know, at two-and-twenty I lived on Florine; but what is excusable in a youth, what then seems smart and charming, is a disgrace to a man of forty. Hitherto we have shared the burden of existence, and it has not been lovely for this year and half. Out of devotion to me you wear nothing but black, and that does me no credit."—Dinah gave one of those magnanimous shrugs which are worth all the words ever spoken.—"Yes," Étienne went on, "I know you sacrifice everything to my whims, even your beauty. And I, with a heart worn out in past struggles, a soul full of dark presentiments as to the future, I cannot repay your exquisite love with an equal affection. We were very happy—without a cloud—for a long time.—Well, then, I cannot bear to see so sweet a poem end badly. Am I wrong?"

Madame de la Baudraye loved Étienne so truly, that this prudence, worthy of de Clagny, gratified her and stanched her tears.

"He loves me for myself alone!" thought she, looking at him with smiling eyes.

After four years of intimacy, this woman's love now combined every shade of affection which our powers of analysis can discern, and which modern society has created; one of the most remarkable men of our age, whose death is a recent loss to the world of letters, Beyle (Stendhal), was the first to delineate them to perfection.

Lousteau could produce in Dinah the acute agitation which

may be compared to magnetism, that upsets every power of the mind and body, and overcomes every instinct of resistance in a woman. A look from him, or his hand laid on hers, reduced her to implicit obedience. A kind word or a smile wreathed the poor woman's soul with flowers; a fond look elated, a cold look depressed her. When she walked, taking his arm and keeping step with him in the street or on the boulevard, she was so entirely absorbed in him that she lost all sense of herself. Fascinated by this fellow's wit, magnetized my his airs, his vices were but trivial defects in her eyes. She loved the puffs of cigar smoke that the wind brought into her room from the garden; she went to inhale them, and made no wry faces, hiding herself to enjoy them. She hated the publisher or the newspaper editor who refused Lousteau money on the ground of the enormous advances he had had already. She deluded herself so far as to believe that her bohemian was writing a novel, for which the payment was to come, instead of working off a debt long since incurred.

This, no doubt, is true love, and includes every mode of loving; the love of the heart and of the head—passion, caprice, and taste—to accept Beyle's definitions. Didine loved him so wholly, that in certain moments when her critical judgment, just by nature, and constantly exercised since she had lived in Paris, compelled her to read to the bottom of Lousteau's soul, sense was still too much for reason, and suggested excuses.

"And what am I?" she replied. "A woman who has put herself outside the pale. Since I have sacrificed all a woman's honor, why should not you sacrifice to me some of a man's honor? Do we not live outside the limits of social conventionality? Why not accept from me what Nathan can accept from Florine? We will square accounts when we part, and only death can part us—you know. My happiness is your honor, Étienne, as my constancy and your happiness are mine. If I fail to make you happy, all is at an end. If I cause you a pang, condemn me.

"Our debts are paid; we have ten thousand francs a year,

and between us we can certainly make eight thousand francs a year—I will write theatrical articles.—With fifteen hundred francs a month we shall be as rich as Rothschild.—Be quite easy. I will have some lovely dresses, and give you every day some gratified vanity, as on the first night of Nathan's play——"

"And what about your mother, who goes to Mass every day, and wants to bring a priest to the house and make you give up this way of life?"

"Every one has a pet vice. You smoke, she preaches at me, poor woman! But she takes great care of the children, she takes them out, she is absolutely devoted, and idolizes me. Would you hinder her from crying?"

"What will be thought of me?"

"But we do not live for the world!" cried she, raising Étienne and making him sit by her. "Besides, we shall be married some day—we have the risks of a sea voyage——"

"I never thought of that," said Lousteau simply; and he added to himself, "Time enough to part when little La Baudraye is safe back again."

From that day forth Étienne lived in luxury; and Dinah, on first nights, could hold her own with the best dressed women in Paris. Lousteau was so fatuous as to affect, among his friends, the attitude of a man overborne, bored to extinction, ruined by Madame de la Baudraye.

"Oh, what would I not give to the friend who would deliver me from Dinah! But no one ever can!" said he. "She loves me enough to throw herself out of the window if I told her."

The journalist was duly pitied; he would take precautions against Dinah's jealousy when he accepted an invitation. And then he was shamelessly unfaithful. Monsieur de Clagny, really in despair at seeing Dinah in such disgraceful circumstances when she might have been so rich, and in so wretched a position at the time when her original ambitions would have been fulfilled, came to warn her, to tell her—"You are betrayed," and she only replied, "I know it."

The lawyer was silenced; still he found his tongue to say one thing.

Madame de la Baudraye interrupted him when he had scarcely spoken a word.

"Do you still love me?" she asked.

"I would lose my soul for you!" he exclaimed, starting to his feet.

The hapless man's eyes flashed like torches, he trembled like a leaf, his throat was rigid, his hair thrilled to the roots; he believed he was so blessed as to be accepted as his idol's avenger, and this poor joy filled him with rapture.

"Why are you so startled?" said she, making him sit down again. "That is how I love him."

The lawyer understood this argument *ad hominem*. And there were tears in the eyes of the Judge, who had just condemned a man to death!

Lousteau's satiety, that odious conclusion of such illicit relations, had betrayed itself in a thousand little things, which are like grains of sand thrown against the panes of the little magical hut where those who love dwell and dream. These grains of sand, which grow to be pebbles, had never been discerned by Dinah till they were as big as rocks. Madame de la Baudraye had at last thoroughly understood Lousteau's character.

"He is," she had said to her mother, "a poet, defenceless against disaster, mean out of laziness, not for want of heart, and rather too prone to pleasure; in short, a great cat, whom it is impossible to hate. What would become of him without me? I hindered his marriage; he has no prospects. His talent would perish in privations."

"Oh, my Dinah!" Madame Piédefer had exclaimed, "what a hell you live in! What is the feeling that gives you strength enough to persist?"

"I will be a mother to him!" she had replied.

There are certain horrible situations in which we come to no decision till the moment when our friends discern our dishonor. We accept compromises with ourself so long as we

escape a censor who comes to play prosecutor. Monsieur de Clagny, as clumsy as a tortured man, had been torturing Dinah.

"To preserve my love I will be all that Madame de Pompadour was to preserve her power," said she to herself when Monsieur de Clagny had left her. And this phrase sufficiently proves that her love was becoming a burden to her, and would presently be a toil rather than a pleasure.

The part now assumed by Dinah was horribly painful, and Lousteau made it no easier to play. When he wanted to go out after dinner he would perform the tenderest little farces of affection, and address Dinah in words full of devotion; he would take her by the chain, and when he had bruised her with it, even while he hurt her, the lordly ingrate would say, "Did I wound you?"

These false caresses and deceptions had degrading consequences for Dinah, who believed in a revival of his love. The mother, alas, gave way to the mistress with shameful readiness. She felt herself a mere plaything in the man's hands, and at last she confessed to herself:

"Well, then, I will be his plaything!" finding joy in it—the rapture of damnation.

When this woman, of a really manly spirit, pictured herself as living in solitude, she felt her courage fail. She preferred the anticipated and inevitable miseries of this fierce intimacy to the absence of the joys, which were all the more exquisite because they arose from the midst of remorse, of terrible struggles with herself, of a *No* persuaded to be *Yes*. At every moment she seemed to come across the pool of bitter water found in a desert, and drunk with greater relish than the traveler would find in sipping the finest wines at a prince's table.

When Dinah wondered to herself at midnight:

"Will he come home, or will he not?" she was not alive again till she heard the familiar sound of Lousteau's boots, and his well-known ring at the bell.

She would often try to restrain him by giving him pleasure;

she would hope to be a match for her rivals, and leave them no hold on that satiated heart. How many times a day would she rehearse the tragedy of *Le Dernier Jour d'un condamné*, saying to herself, "To-morrow we part." And how often would a word, a look, a kiss full of apparently artless feeling, bring her back to the depths of her love!

It was terrible. More than once had she meditated suicide as she paced the little town garden where a few pale flowers bloomed. In fact, she had not yet exhausted the vast treasure of devotion and love which a loving woman bears in her heart.

The romance of *Adolphe* was her Bible, her study, for above all else she would not be an Ellénore. She allowed herself no tears, she avoided all the bitterness so cleverly described by the critic to whom we owe an analysis of this striking work; whose comments indeed seemed to Dinah almost superior to the book. And she read again and again this fine essay by the only real critic who has written in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, an article now printed at the beginning of the new edition of *Adolphe*.

"No," she would say to herself, as she repeated the author's fateful words, "no, I will not 'give my requests the form of an order,' I will not 'fly to tears as a means of revenge,' I will not 'condemn the things I once approved without reservation,' I will not 'dog his footsteps with a prying eye'; if he plays truant, he shall not on his return 'see a scornful lip, whose kiss is an unanswerable command.' No, 'my silence shall not be a reproach nor my first word a quarrel.'—I will not be like every other woman!" she went on, laying on her table the little yellow paper volume which had already attracted Lousteau's remark, "What! are you studying *Adolphe?*"—"If for one day only he should recognize my merits and say, 'That victim never uttered a cry!'—it will be all I ask. And besides, the others only have him for an hour; I have him for life!"

Thinking himself justified by his private tribunal in punishing his wife, Monsieur de la Baudraye robbed her to

achieve his cherished enterprise of reclaiming three thousand acres of moorland, to which he had devoted himself ever since 1836, living like a mouse. He manipulated the property left by Monsieur Silas Piédefer so ingeniously, that he contrived to reduce the proved value to eight hundred thousand francs, while pocketing twelve hundred thousand. He did not announce his return; but while his wife was enduring unspeakable woes, he was building farms, digging trenches, and ploughing rough ground with a courage that ranked him among the most remarkable agriculturists of the province.

The four hundred thousand francs he had filched from his wife were spent in three years on this undertaking, and the estate of Anzy was expected to return seventy-two thousand francs a year of net profits after the taxes were paid. The eight hundred thousand he invested at four and a half per cent in the funds, buying at eighty francs, at the time of the financial crisis brought about by the Ministry of the First of March, as it was called. By thus securing to his wife an income of forty-eight thousand francs he considered himself no longer in her debt. Could he not restore the odd twelve hundred thousand as soon as the four and a half per cents had risen above a hundred? He was now the greatest man in Sancerre, with the exception of one—the richest proprietor in France—whose rival he considered himself. He saw himself with an income of a hundred and forty thousand francs, of which ninety thousand formed the revenue from the lands he had entailed. Having calculated that besides this net income he paid ten thousand francs in taxes, three thousand in working expenses, ten thousand to his wife, and twelve hundred to his mother-in-law, he would say, in the literary circles of Sancerre:

"I am reputed miserly, and said to spend nothing; but my outlay amounts to twenty-six thousand five hundred francs a year. And I have still to pay for the education of my two children! I daresay it is not a pleasing fact to the Milauds of Nevers, but the second house of La Baudraye may yet have as noble a career as the first.—I shall most likely go to Paris

and petition the King of the French to grant me the title of Count—Monsieur Roy is a Count—and my wife would be pleased to be Madame la Comtesse."

And this was said with such splendid coolness that no one would have dared to laugh at the little man. Only Monsieur Boirouge, the Presiding Judge, remarked:

"In your place, I should not be happy unless I had a daughter."

"Well, I shall go to Paris before long——" said the Baron.

In the early part 1842 Madame de la Baudraye, feeling that she was to Lousteau no more than a reserve in the background, had again sacrificed herself absolutely to secure his comfort; she had resumed her black raiment, but now it was in sign of mourning, for her pleasure was turning to remorse. She was too often put to shame not to feel the weight of the chain, and her mother found her sunk in those moods of meditation into which visions of the future cast unhappy souls in a sort of torpor.

Madame Piédefer, by the advice of her spiritual director, was on the watch for the moment of exhaustion, which the priest told her would inevitably supervene, and then she pleaded in behalf of the children. She restricted herself to urging that Dinah and Lousteau should live apart, not asking her to give him up. In real life these violent situations are not closed as they are in books, by death or cleverly contrived catastrophes; they end far less poetically—in disgust, in the blighting of every flower of the soul, in the commonplace of habit, and very often too in another passion, which robs a wife of the interest which is traditionally ascribed to women. So, when common sense, the law of social proprieties, family interest—all the mixed elements which, since the Restoration, have been dignified by the name of Public Morals, out of sheer aversion to the name of the Catholic religion—where this is seconded by a sense of insults a little too offensive; when the fatigue of constant self-sacrifice has almost reached the point of exhaustion; and when, under these circumstances, a too cruel blow—one of those mean acts which

a man never lets a woman know of unless he believes himself to be her assured master—puts the crowning touch to her revulsion and disenchantment, the moment has come for the intervention of the friend who undertakes the cure. Madame Piédefer had no great difficulty now in removing the film from her daughter's eyes.

She sent for Monsieur de Clagny, who completed the work by assuring Madame de la Baudraye that if she would give up Étienne, her husband would allow her to keep the children and to live in Paris, and would restore her to the command of her own fortune.

"And what a life you are leading!" said he. "With care and judgment, and the support of some pious and charitable persons, you may have a salon and conquer a position. Paris is not Sancerre."

Dinah left it to Monsieur de Clagny to negotiate a reconciliation with the old man.

Monsieur de la Baudraye had sold his wine well, he had sold his wool, he had felled his timber, and, without telling his wife, he had come to Paris to invest two hundred thousand francs in the purchase of a delightful residence in the Rue de l'Arcade, that was being sold in liquidation of an aristocratic House that was in difficulties. He had been a member of the Council for the Department since 1826, and now, paying ten thousand francs in taxes, he was doubly qualified for a peerage under the conditions of the new legislation.

Some time before the elections of 1842 he had put himself forward as candidate unless he were meanwhile called to the Upper House as Peer of France. At the same time, he asked for the title of Count, and for promotion to the higher grade of the Legion of Honor. In the matter of the elections, the Ministry approved of everything that could give strength to the dynastic nominations; now, in the event of Monsieur de la Baudraye being won over to the Government, Sancerre would be more than ever a rotten borough of royalism. Monsieur de Clagny, whose talents and modesty were more and more highly appreciated by the authorities, gave Monsieur de la

Baudraye his support; he pointed out that by raising this enterprising agriculturist to the peerage, a guarantee would be offered to such important undertakings.

Monsieur de la Baudraye, then, a Count, a Peer of France, and Commander of the Legion of Honor, was vain enough to wish to cut a figure with a wife and handsomely appointed house.—"He wanted to enjoy life," he said.

He therefore addressed a letter to his wife, dictated by Monsieur de Clagny, begging her to live under his roof and to furnish the house, giving play to the taste of which the evidences, he said, had charmed him at the Château d'Anzy. The newly made Count pointed out to his wife that while the interests of their property forbade his leaving Sancerre, the education of their boys required her presence in Paris. The accommodating husband desired Monsieur de Clagny to place sixty thousand francs at the disposal of Madame la Comtesse for the interior decoration of their mansion, requesting that she would have a marble tablet inserted over the gateway with the inscription: *Hôtel de la Baudraye.*

He then accounted to his wife for the money derived from the estate of Silas Piédefer, told her of the investment at four and a half per cent of the eight hundred thousand francs he had brought from New York, and allowed her that income for her expenses, including the education of the children. As he would be compelled to stay in Paris during some part of the session of the House of Peers, he requested his wife to reserve for him a little suite of rooms in an *entresol* over the kitchens.

"Bless me! why, he is growing young again—a gentleman! —a magnifico!—What will he become next? It is quite alarming," said Madame de la Baudraye.

"He now fulfils all your wishes at the age of twenty," replied the lawyer.

The comparison of her future prospects with her present position was unendurable to Dinah. Only the day before, Anna de Fontaine had turned her head away in order to avoid seeing her bosom friend at the Chamarolles' school.

"I am a countess," said Dinah to herself. "I shall have the peer's blue hammer-cloth on my carriage, and the leaders of the literary world in my drawing-room—and I will look at her!"—And it was this little triumph that told with all its weight at the moment of her rehabilitation, as the world's contempt had of old weighed on her happiness.

One fine day, in May 1842, Madame de la Baudraye paid all her little household debts and left a thousand crowns on top of the packet of receipted bills. After sending her mother and the children away to the Hôtel de la Baudraye, she awaited Lousteau, dressed ready to leave the house. When the deposed king of her heart came into dinner, she said:

"I have upset the pot, my dear. Madame de la Baudraye requests the pleasure of your company at the *Rocher de Cancale.*"

She carried off Lousteau, quite bewildered by the light and easy manners assumed by the woman who till that morning had been the slave of his least whim, for she too had been acting a farce for two months past.

"Madame de la Baudraye is figged out as if for a first night," said he—*une première,* the slang abbreviation for a first performance.

"Do not forget the respect you owe to Madame de la Baudraye," said Dinah gravely. "I do not mean to understand such a word as *figged out.*"

"Didine a rebel!" said he, putting his arm round her waist.

"There is no such person as Didine; you have killed her, my dear," she replied, releasing herself. "I am taking you to the first performance of *Madame la Comtesse de la Baudraye.*"

"It is true, then, that our insect is a peer of France?"

"The nomination is to be gazetted in this evening's *Moniteur,* as I am told by Monsieur de Clagny, who is promoted to the Court of Appeal."

"Well, it is quite right," said the journalist. "The ento-

mology of society ought to be represented in the Upper House."

"My friend, we are parting for ever," said Madame de la Baudraye, trying to control the trembling of her voice. "I have dismissed the two servants. When you go in, you will find the house in order, and no debts. I shall always feel a mother's affection for you, but in secret. Let us part calmly, without a fuss, like decent people.

"Have you had a fault to find with my conduct during the past six years?"

"None, but that you have spoiled my life and wrecked my prospects," said he in a hard tone. "You have read Benjamin Constant's book very diligently; you have even studied the last critique on it; but you have read with a woman's eyes. Though you have one of those superior intellects which would make the fortune of a poet, you have never dared to take the man's point of view.

"That book, my dear, is of both sexes.—We agreed that books were male or female, dark or fair. In *Adolphe* women see nothing but Ellénore; young men see only Adolphe; men of experience see Ellénore and Adolphe; political men see the whole of social existence. You did not think it necessary to read the soul of Adolphe—any more than your critic indeed, who saw only Ellénore. What kills that poor fellow, my dear, is that he has sacrificed his future for a woman; that he never can be what he might have been—an ambassador, a minister, a chamberlain, a poet—and rich. He gives up six years of his energy at that stage of his life when a man is ready to submit to the hardships of any apprenticeship—to a petticoat, which he outstrips in the career of ingratitude, for the woman who has thrown over her first lover is certain sooner or later to desert the second. Adolphe is, in fact, a tow-haired German, who has not spirit enough to be false to Ellénore. There are Adolphes who spare their Ellénores all ignominious quarreling and reproaches, who say to themselves, 'I will not talk of what I have sacrificed; I will not for ever be showing the stump of my wrist to that incarnate selfishness I have made my

queen,' as Ramorny does in *The Fair Maid of Perth.* But men like that, my dear, get cast aside.

"Adolphe is a man of birth, an aristocratic nature, who wants to get back into the highroad to honors and recover his social birthright, his blighted position.—You, at this moment, are playing both parts. You are suffering from the pangs of having lost your position, and think yourself justified in throwing over a hapless lover whose misfortune it has been that he fancied you so far superior as to understand that, though a man's heart ought to be true, his sex may be allowed to indulge its caprices."

"And do you suppose that I shall not make it my business to restore to you all you have lost by me? Be quite easy," said Madame de la Baudraye, astounded by this attack. "Your Ellénore is not dying; and if God gives her life, if you amend your ways, if you give up courtesans and actresses, we will find you a better match than a Félicie Cardot."

The two lovers were sullen. Lousteau affected dejection, he aimed at appearing hard and cold; while Dinah, really distressed, listened to the reproaches of her heart.

"Why," said Lousteau presently, "why not end as we ought to have begun—hide our love from all eyes, and see each other in secret?"

"Never!" cried the new-made Countess, with an icy look. "Do you not comprehend that we are, after all, but finite creatures? Our feelings seem infinite by reason of our anticipation of heaven, but here on earth they are limited by the strength of our physical being. There are some feeble, mean natures which may receive an endless number of wounds and live on; but there are some more highly-tempered souls which snap at last under repeated blows. You have——"

"Oh! enough!" cried he. "No more copy! Your dissertation is unnecessary, since you can justify yourself by merely saying—'I have ceased to love!'"

"What!" she exclaimed in bewilderment. "Is it I who have ceased to love?"

"Certainly. You have calculated that I gave you more

trouble, more vexation than pleasure, and you desert your partner——"

"I desert!——" cried she, clasping her hands.

"Have not you yourself just said 'Never'?"

"Well, then, yes! *Never,*" she repeated vehemently.

This final *Never,* spoken in the fear of falling once more under Lousteau's influence, was interpreted by him as the death-warrant of his power, since Dinah remained insensible to his sarcastic scorn.

The journalist could not suppress a tear. He was losing a sincere and unbounded affection. He had found in Dinah the gentlest La Vallière, the most delightful Pompadour that any egoist short of a king could hope for; and, like a boy who has discovered that by dint of tormenting a cockchafer he has killed it, Lousteau shed a tear.

Madame de la Baudraye rushed out of the private room where they had been dining, paid the bill, and fled home to the Rue de l'Arcade, scolding herself and thinking herself a brute.

Dinah, who had made her house a model of comfort, now metamorphosed herself. This double metamorphosis cost thirty thousand francs more than her husband had anticipated.

The fatal accident which in 1842 deprived the House of Orleans of the heir-presumptive having necessitated a meeting of the Chambers in August of that year, little La Baudraye came to present his titles to the Upper House sooner than he had expected, and then saw what his wife had done. He was so much delighted, that he paid the thirty thousand francs without a word, just as he had formerly paid eight thousand for decorating La Baudraye.

On his return from the Luxembourg, where he had been presented according to custom by two of his peer—the Baron de Nucingen and the Marquis de Montriveau—the new Count met the old Duc de Chaulieu, a former creditor, walking along, umbrella in hand, while he himself sat perched in a low chaise

on which his coat-of-arms was resplendent, with the motto, *Deo sio patet fides et hominibus.* This contrast filled his heart with a large draught of the balm on which the middle class has been getting drunk ever since 1840.

Madame de la Baudraye was shocked to see her husband improved and looking better than on the day of his marriage. The little dwarf, full of rapturous delight, at sixty-four triumphed in the life which had so long been denied him; in the family, which his handsome cousin Milaud of Nevers had declared he would never have; and in his wife—who had asked Monsieur and Madame de Clagny to dinner to meet the curé of the parish and his two sponsors to the Chamber of Peers. He petted the children with fatuous delight.

The handsome display on the table met with his approval.

"These are the fleeces of the Berry sheep," said he, showing Monsieur de Nucingen the dish-covers surmounted by his newly-won coronet. "They are of silver, you see!"

Though consumed by melancholy, which she concealed with the determination of a really superior woman, Dinah was charming, witty, and, above all, young again in her court mourning.

"You might declare," cried La Baudraye to Monsieur de Nucingen, with a wave of his hand to his wife, "that the Countess was not yet thirty."

"Ah, ha! Matame is a voman of dirty!" replied the Baron, who was prone to time-honored remarks, which he took to be the small change of conversation.

"In every sense of the words," replied the Countess. "I am, in fact, five-and-thirty, and mean to set up a little passion——"

"Oh yes, my wife ruins me in curiosities and china images——"

"She started that mania at an early age," said the Marquis de Montriveau with a smile.

"Yes," said La Baudraye, with a cold stare at the Marquis, whom he had known at Bourges, "you know that in '25, '26, and '27, she picked a million francs' worth of treasures. Anzy is a perfect museum."

"What a cool hand!" thought Monsieur de Clagny, as he saw this little country miser quite on the level of his new position.

But misers have savings of all kinds ready for use.

On the day after the vote on the Regency had passed the Chambers, the little Count went back to Sancerre for the vintage and resumed his old habits.

In the course of that winter, the Comtesse de la Baudraye, with the support of the Attorney-General to the Court of Appeals, tried to form a little circle. Of course, she had an "at home" day, she made a selection among men of mark, receiving none but those of serious purpose and ripe years. She tried to amuse herself by going to the Opera, French and Italian. Twice a week she appeared there with her mother and Madame de Clagny, who was made by her husband to visit Dinah. Still, in spite of her cleverness, her charming manners, her fashionable stylishness, she was never really happy but with her children, on whom she lavished all her disappointed affection.

Worthy Monsieur de Clagny tried to recruit women for the Countess' circle, and he succeeded; but he was more successful among the advocates of piety than the women of fashion.

"And they bore her!" said he to himself with horror, as he saw his idol matured by grief, pale from remorse, and then, in all the splendor of recovered beauty, restored by a life of luxury and care for her boys. This devoted friend, encouraged in his efforts by her mother and by the curé, was full of expedient. Every Wednesday he introduced some celebrity from Germany, England, Italy, or Prussia to his dear Countess; he spoke of her as a quite exceptional woman to people to whom she hardly addresses two words; but she listened to them with such deep attention that they went away fully convinced of her superiority. In Paris, Dinah conquered by silence, as at Sancerre she had conquered by loquacity. Now and then, some smart saying about affairs, or sarcasm on an absurdity, betrayed a woman accustomed to deal with ideas—the woman who, four years since, had given new life to Lousteau's articles.

This phase was to the poor lawyer's hapless passion like the late season known as the Indian summer after a sunless year. He affected to be older than he was, to have the right to befriend Dinah without doing her an injury, and kept himself at a distance as though he were young, handsome, and compromising, like a man who has happiness to conceal. He tried to keep his little attentions a profound secret, and the trifling gifts which Dinah showed to every one; and he endeavored to suggest a dangerous meaning for his little services.

"He plays at passion," said the Countess, laughing. She made fun of Monsieur de Clagny to his face, and the lawyer said, "She notices me."

"I impress that poor man so deeply," said she to her mother, laughing, "that if I would say Yes, I believe he would say No."

One evening Monsieur de Clagny and his wife were taking his dear Countess home from the theatre, and she was deeply pensive. They had been to the first performance of Léon Gozlan's first play, *La Main Droite et la Main Gauche* (The Right Hand and the Left).

"What are you thinking about?" asked the lawyer, alarmed at his idol's dejection.

This deep and persistent melancholy, though disguised by the Countess, was a perilous malady for which Monsieur de Clagny knew no remedy; for true love is often clumsy, especially when it is not reciprocated. True love takes its expression from the character. Now, this good man loved after the fashion of Alceste, when Madame de la Baudraye wanted to be loved after the manner of Philinte. The meaner side of love can never get on with the Misanthrope's loyalty. Thus, Dinah had taken care never to open her heart to this man. How could she confess to him that she sometimes regretted the slough she had left?

She felt a void in this fashionable life; she had no one for whom to dress, or whom to tell of her successes and triumphs. Sometimes the memory of her wretchedness came to her, mingled with memories of consuming joys. She would hate

Lousteau for not taking any pains to follow her; she would have liked to get tender or furious letters from him.

Dinah made no reply, so Monsieur de Clagny repeated the question, taking the Countess' hand and pressing it between his own with devout respect.

"Will you have the right hand or the left?" said she, smiling.

"The left," said he, "for I suppose you mean the truth or a fib."

"Well, then, I saw him," she said, speaking into the lawyer's ear. "And as I saw him looking so sad, so out of heart, I said to myself, Has he a cigar? Has he any money?"

"If you wish for the truth, I can tell it you," said the lawyer. "He is living as a husband with Fanny Beaupré. You have forced me to tell you this secret; I should never have told you, for you might have suspected me perhaps of an ungenerous motive."

Madame de la Baudraye grasped his hand.

"Your husband," said she to her chaperon, "is one of the rarest souls!—Ah! Why——"

She shrank into her corner, looking out of the window, but she did not finish her sentence, of which the lawyer could guess the end: "Why had not Lousteau a little of your husband's generosity of heart?"

This information served, however, to cure Dinah of her melancholy; she threw herself into the whirl of fashion. She wished for success, and she achieved it; still, she did not make much way with women, and found it difficult to get introductions.

In the month of March, Madame Piédefer's friends the priests and Monsieur de Clagny made a fine stroke by getting Madame de la Baudraye appointed receiver of subscriptions for the great charitable work founded by Madame de Carcado. Then she was commissioned to collect from the Royal Family their donations for the benefit of the sufferers from the earthquake at Guadeloupe. The Marquise d'Espard, to whom Monsieur de Canalis read the list of ladies thus appointed, one evening at the Opera, said, on hearing that of the Countess:

"I have lived a long time in the world, and I can remember nothing finer than the manœuvres undertaken for the rehabilitation of Madame de la Baudraye."

In the early spring, which, by some whim of our planets, smiled on Paris in the first week of March in 1843, making the Champs-Élysées green and leafy before Longchamp, Fanny Beaupré's attaché had seen Madame de la Baudraye several times without being seen by her. More than once he was stung to the heart by one of those promptings of jealousy and envy familiar to those who are born and bred provincials, when he beheld his former mistress comfortably ensconced in a handsome carriage, well dressed, with dreamy eyes, and his two little boys, one at each window. He accused himself with all the more virulence because he was waging war with the sharpest poverty of all—poverty unconfessed. Like all essentially light and frivolous natures, he cherished the singular point of honor which consists in never derogating in the eyes of one's own little public, which makes men on the Bourse commit crimes to escape expulsion from the temple of the goddess Per-cent, and has given some criminals courage enough to perform acts of virtue.

Lousteau dined and breakfasted and smoked as if he were a rich man. Not for an inheritance would he have bought any but the dearest cigars, for himself as well as for the playwright or author with whom he went into the shop. The journalist took his walks abroad in patent leather boots; but he was constantly afraid of an execution on goods which, to use the bailiff's slang, had already received the last sacrament. Fanny Beaupré had nothing left to pawn, and her salary was pledged to pay her debts. After exhausting every possible advance of pay from newspapers, magazines, and publishers, Étienne knew not of what ink he could churn gold. Gambling-houses, so ruthlessly suppressed, could no longer, as of old, cash I O U's drawn over the green table by beggary in despair. In short, the journalist was reduced to such extremity that he had just borrowed a hundred francs of the poorest of his

friends, Bixiou, from whom he had never yet asked for a franc. What distressed Lousteau was not the fact of owing five thousand francs, but seeing himself bereft of his elegance, and of the furniture purchased at the cost of so many privations, and added to by Madame de la Baudraye.

On April the 3rd, a yellow poster, torn down by the porter after being displayed on the wall, announced the sale of a handsome suite of furniture on the following Saturday, the day fixed for sales under legal authority. Lousteau was taking a walk, smoking cigars, and seeking ideas—for, in Paris, ideas are in the air, they smile on you from a street corner, they splash up with a spurt of mud from under the wheels of a cab! Thus loafing, he had been seeking ideas for articles, and subjects for novels for a month past, and had found nothing but friends who carried him off to dinner or to the play, and who intoxicated his woes, telling him that champagne would inspire him.

"Beware," said the virulent Bixiou one night, the man who would at the same moment give a comrade a hundred francs and stab him to the heart with a sarcasm; "if you go to sleep drunk every night, one day you will wake up mad."

On the day before, the Friday, the unhappy wretch, although he was accustomed to poverty, felt like a man condemned to death. Of old he would have said:

"Well, the furniture is very old! I will buy new."

But he was incapable now of literary legerdemain. Publishers, undermined by piracy, paid badly; the newspapers made close bargains with hard-driven writers, as the Opera managers did with tenors that sang flat.

He walked on, his eye on the crowd, though seeing nothing, a cigar in his mouth, and his hands in his pockets, every feature of his face twitching, and an affected smile on his lips. Then he saw Madame de la Baudraye go by in a carriage; she was going to the Boulevard by the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin to drive in the Bois.

"There is nothing else left!" said he to himself, and he went home to smarten himself up.

That evening, at seven, he arrived in a hackney cab at Madame de la Baudraye's door, and begged the porter to send a note up to the Countess—a few lines, as follows:

"Would Madame la Comtesse do Monsieur Lousteau the favor of receiving him for a moment, and at once?"

This note was sealed with a seal which as lovers they had both used. Madame de la Baudraye had had the word *Parce que* engraved on a genuine Oriental carnelian—a potent word—a woman's word—the word that accounts for everything, even for the Creation.

The Countess had just finished dressing to go to the Opera; Friday was her night in turn for her box. At the sight of this seal she turned pale.

"I will come," she said, tucking the note into her dress.

She was firm enough to conceal her agitation, and begged her mother to see the children put to bed. She then sent for Lousteau, and received him in a boudoir, next to the great drawing-room, with open doors. She was going to a ball after the Opera, and was wearing a beautiful dress of brocade in stripes alternately plain and flowered with pale blue. Her gloves, trimmed with tassels, showed off her beautiful white arms. She was shimmering with lace and all the dainty trifles required by fashion. Her hair, dressed *à la Sévigné*, gave her a look of elegance; a necklace of pearls lay on her bosom like bubbles on snow.

"What is the matter, monsieur?" said the Countess, putting out her foot from below her skirt to rest it on a velvet cushion. "I thought, I hoped, I was quite forgotten."

"If I should reply *Never*, you would refuse to believe me," said Lousteau, who remained standing, or walked about the room, chewing the flowers he plucked from the flower-stands full of plants that scented the room.

For a moment silence reigned. Madame de la Baudraye, studying Lousteau, saw that he was dressed as the most fastidious dandy might have been.

"You are the only person in the world who can help me, or hold out a plank to me—for I am drowning, and have already swallowed more than one mouthful——" said he, standing still in front of Dinah, and seeming to yield to an overpowering impulse. "Since you see me here, it is because my affairs are going to the devil."

"That is enough," said she; "I understand."

There was another pause, during which Lousteau turned away, took out his handkerchief, and seemed to wipe away a tear.

"How much do you want, Étienne," she went on in motherly tones. "We are at this moment old comrades; speak to me as you would to—to Bixiou."

"To save my furniture from vanishing into thin air to-morrow morning at the auction mart, eighteen hundred francs! To repay my friends, as much again!. Three quarters' rent to the landlord—whom you know.—My 'uncle' wants five hundred francs——"

"And you?—to live on?"

"Oh! I have my pen——"

"It is heavier to lift than any one could believe who reads your articles," said she, with a subtle smile.—"I have not such a sum as you need, but come to-morrow at eight; the bailiff will surely wait till nine, especially if you bring him away to pay him."

She must, she felt, dismiss Lousteau, who affected to be unable to look at her; she herself felt such pity as might cut every social Gordian knot.

"Thank you," she added, rising and offering her hand to Lousteau. "Your confidence has done me good! It is long indeed since my heart has known such joy——"

Lousteau took her hand and pressed it tenderly to his heart.

"A drop of water in the desert—and sent by the hand of an angel! God always does things handsomely!"

He spoke half in jest and half pathetically; but, believe me, as a piece of acting it was as fine as Talma's in his famous

part of *Leicester,* which was played throughout with touches of this kind. Dinah felt his heart beating through his coat; it was throbbing with satisfaction, for the journalist had had a narrow escape from the hulks of justice; but it also beat with a very natural fire at seeing Dinah rejuvenescent and restored by wealth.

Madame de la Baudraye, stealing an examining glance at Étienne, saw that his expression was in harmony with the flowers of love, which, as she thought, had blossomed again in that throbbing heart; she tried to look once into the eyes of the man she had loved so well, but the seething blood rushed through her veins and mounted to her brain. Their eyes met with the same fiery glow as had encouraged Lousteau on the Quay by the Loire to crumple Dinah's muslin gown. The Bohemian put his arm round her waist, she yielded, and their cheeks were touching..

"Here comes my mother, hide!" cried Dinah in alarm. And she hurried forward to intercept Madame Piédefer.

"Mamma," said she—this word was to the stern old lady a coaxing expression which never failed of its effect—"will you do me a great favor? Take the carriage and go yourself to my banker, Monsieur Mongenod, with a note I will give you, and bring back six thousand francs. Come, come—it is an act of charity; come into my room."

And she dragged away her mother, who seemed very anxious to see who it was that her daughter had been talking with in the boudoir.

Two days afterwards, Madame Piédefer held a conference with the curé of the parish. After listening to the lamentations of the old mother, who was in despair, the priest said very gravely:

"Any moral regeneration which is not based on a strong religious sentiment, and carried out in the bosom of the Church, is built on sand.—The many means of grace enjoined by the Catholic religion, small as they are, and not understood, are so many dams necessary to restrain the violence of evil promptings. Persuade your daughter to perform all her religious duties, and we shall save her yet."

Within ten days of this meeting the Hôtel de la Baudraye was shut up. The Countess, the children, and her mother, in short, the whole household, including a tutor, had gone away to Sancerre, where Dinah intended to spend the summer. She was everything that was nice to the Count, people said.

And so the Muse of Sancerre had simply come back to family and married life; but certain evil tongues declared that she had been compelled to come back, for that the little peer's wishes would no doubt be fulfilled—he hoped for a little girl.

Gatien and Monsieur Gravier lavished every care, every servile attention on the handsome Countess. Gatien, who during Madame de la Baudraye's long absence had been to Paris to learn the arts of *lionnerie* or dandyism, was supposed to have a good chance of finding favor in the eyes of the disenchanted "Superior Woman." Others bet on the tutor; Madame Piédefer urged the claims of religion.

In 1844, about the middle of June, as the Comte de la Baudraye was taking a walk on the Mall at Sancerre with the two fine little boys, he met Monsieur Milaud, the Public Prosecutor, who was at Sancerre on business, and said to him:

"These are my children, cousin."

"Ah, ha! so these are our children!" replied the lawyer, with a mischievous twinkle.

PARIS, *June* 1843—*August* 1844.